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Social Media & Digital Networks in Human Rights Advocacy (3 ECTS)

Dr. Thorsten Thiel

Syllabus

Governance and Human Rights (M.A.)

Instructor / Lecturer Dr. Thorsten Thiel

	<p>Professional Background</p> <p>Dr. Thorsten Thiel is the coordinator of the Leibniz research association 'Crisis in a globalised world', which is located at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt. He is also an associate member at the Cluster of Excellence "The formation of normative orders" (Frankfurt). Thorsten has been an interim professor for political theory at the University Trier (WS 2015/16). His work focusses on questions of democratic theory, European integration and international institutions. He has worked extensively on the question how the digital turn affects democratic societies.</p>
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1. Course Description

Modern technologies and means of communication are essential instruments to manage and to support creative thinking, skills of problem solving and participation in political processes. They have, therefore, often been related to social change and democratization. The ubiquity of digital tools and social networks has encouraged optimistic forecasts how democracies can and will change due to new possibilities for civil society actors and the wider public. In the course students will get familiar with the most important debates in democratic theory and social movement theory on how social networks will change political processes. They will become aware of opportunities and limitations and discuss strategies and tools civil society actors make use of.

2. Learning outcomes and competencies

- Students will learn about Social Movement Theories and how they are updated to reflect digital change
- Students will get to know how democratic theories and concepts of the public sphere are affected by changing media practices
- Students will learn about the risks and downsides of social media use in activist contexts
- Students will learn how to use social media to promote the use of governance mechanisms and to protect human rights

4. Overview of dates, content of each part of the course and learning forms and locations

Phases (overlapping)	Content	Learning Form
Phase 1 2017-02-13 – 2017-02-19 (1 week)	Introduction: New Media, New Civics	Online / Individual work
Phase 2 2017-02-20 – 2017-02-26 (1 week)	Social Movement Theory: Supersizing Theory vs Theory 2.0	Online / Individual work
Phase 3 2017-02-27 – 2017-03-12 (2 weeks)	The Logic of Connectivity: Social Movements and Social Networks	Online / Group work
Phase 4 2017-03-13 – 2017-03-26 (2 weeks)	Making the Political Private: Agenda Setting and Mobilization	Online / Individual work
Phase 5 2017-03-27 – 2017-04-09 (2 weeks)	Time to Act: Protest Online and Offline	Online / Individual work

5. Learning activities

Phase 1: Introduction – New Media, New Civics	
<p>Short description</p> <p>The introductory phase will provide students with an overview over the course. We will discuss the content of the course and a first text that explains how new media lead to new civics. Students will have the opportunity to share their own experiences with ‘digital’ political activism and can also comment on the general design of the course.</p>	<p>Learning aims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad overview • Gather student input and adapt course according to students needs • Getting familiar with the universe of cases
<p>Method</p> <p>Online seminar Session, forum discussions and individual readings</p>	<p>Medium for communication</p> <p>Moodle / Adobe Connect</p>
<p>Tasks (step by step)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the webinar session • Read the assigned material • Participate in the forum discussions • Identify a potential case study 	<p>Notes for tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case study selection shall only be started after we have clarified the aims of the course in the webinar. Examples will be provided, but students should find their own campaigns (fulfilled or ongoing) to observe/ research over the duration of the course (a short written presentation in due in phase 3)
<p>Time period</p> <p>1 week (13.02-19.02)</p>	<p>Total estimated study hours</p> <p>5 hours</p>
<p>Material</p> <p><i>boyd, danah</i> 2010: Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications, in: Papacharissi, Zizi (Hrsg.): Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites, London, 39-58. <i>Zuckerman, Ethan</i> 2014: New Media, New Civics, in: Policy & Internet 6: 2, 151-168.</p>	<p>Extra help:</p> <p><i>Fung, Archon/Russon Gilman, Hollie/Shkabatur, Jennifer</i> 2013: Six Models for the Internet + Politics, in: International Studies Review 15: 1, 30-47.</p>



Phase 2: Social Movement Theory: Supersizing Theory vs Theory 2.0	
<p>Short description The second phase will focus on social movement theory and how it has reacted to technological change. We will read and discuss two important texts that discuss whether and what has changed and how theoretical conceptions must be adjusted to reflect new possibilities.</p>	<p>Learning aims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction into social movement theory • Concepts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power in a networked society • Leveraging affordances
<p>Method Seminar session in Adobe Connect, forum discussions and individual readings</p>	<p>Medium for communication Moodle / Adobe Connect</p>
<p>Tasks (step by step)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the assigned material • Participate in the forum discussions • Webinar session (if asked for by the participants) 	<p>Notes for tasks</p>
<p>Time period 1 week (20.02-26.02)</p>	<p>Total estimated study hours 5 hours</p>
<p>Material <i>Earl, Jennifer/Kimport, Katrina</i> 2011: Digitally Enabled Social Change, Boston. P. 3—17; 21-41; 177-192 <i>Castells, Manuel</i> 2011: A Network Theory of Power, in: International Journal of Communication 5, 773–787.</p>	<p>Extra help: <i>Earl, Jennifer /Hunt, Jayson/Garrett, R. Kelly/Dal, Aysenur</i> 2015: New Technologies and Social Movements, in: Della Porta, Donatella/Diani, Mario (Hrsg.): The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements, Oxford. <i>Aday, Sean/Farrell, Henry/Lynch, Marc/Sides, John/Kelly, John/Zuckerman, Ethan</i> 2010: Blogs and Bullets. New Media in Contentious Politics. Peaceworks No. 65.</p>



Phase 3: The Logic of Connectivity: Social Movements and social networks	
Short description The third phase shifts away from theoretical question and is instead dedicated to the practice of social campaigns. Each student will introduce the others to one social media campaign or social movement actor. We will discuss the different actor constellation, strategies and reasons for success or failure. Furthermore, we will have a short look on the social networks used for the activist purposes and discuss the logic and potential pitfalls of corporate social media platforms.	Learning aims <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comparing the use of different social media channels through different actors and campaigns• Getting familiar with different social networks and their logic• Getting insights into advocacy work
Method Written summaries by the students, forum discussions, individual readings	Medium for communication Moodle / Adobe Connect
Tasks (step by step) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write a 2 page summary of your social media campaign• Participate in the webinar session / Online debate with an expert from a CSO (Anne Jung, medico international)• Read the assigned material (second week)• Comment the campaigns observed by fellow students	Notes for tasks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guidelines for writing the summary will be given at the end of the first phase• Case studies can be chosen freely, but some campaigns/ organization/ actors will be named in the first week of the course
Time period 2 weeks (27.02-12.03)	Total estimated study hours 10 hours
Material <i>Chouliaraki, Lilie 2010: Post-humanitarianism: Humanitarian Communication beyond a Politics of Pity, in: International Journal of Cultural Studies 13: 2, 107-126.</i> <i>Youmanns, William L./York, Jillian C. 2012: Social Media and the Activist Toolkit: User Agreements, Corporate Interests, and the Information Infrastructure of Modern Social Movements, in: Journal of Communication 62: 2, 315-329.</i>	Extra help: <i>van Dijck, José 2013: The Culture of Connectivity. A Critical History of Social Media, Oxford (Chapter on Twitter and Facebook)</i>

Phase 4: Making the Political Private: Agenda Setting and Mobilization	
Short description Social media allow for a carefully targeted approach of individuals and sub-segments of the public. In this phase we will discuss how certain audiences can be reached and activated and how social media establishes a feeling of connectedness. Furthermore, we will explore how social media can be used to directly influence mass media coverage and the agenda of political actors.	Learning aims <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness raising strategies → Creating a public • Individualisation and personalisation • Agenda Setting through social media campaigns
Method Seminar session in Adobe Connect, forum discussions and individual readings	Medium for communication Moodle / Adobe Connect
Tasks (step by step) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the assigned material • Watch the online lecture • Participate in the forum discussions • Answer the questions posed in the forum 	Notes for tasks Student presentations are possible and encouraged in this phase. Two possible topics are proposed, but individual arrangements are possible.
Time period 2 weeks (13.03-26.03)	Total estimated study hours 10 hours
Material <i>Bennett, Lance W./Segeberg, Alexandra</i> 2012: The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics, in: Information, Communication & Society 15: 5, 739-768. <i>Gladwell, Malcom</i> : Small Change. Why the Revolution Will not be Tweeted. In: The New Yorker (04.10.2010), 42-49. <i>Shirky, Clay</i> 2011: The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere and Political Change, in: Foreign Affairs January/February.	Extra help: <i>Papacharissi, Zizi</i> 2015: Affective publics and structures of storytelling: sentiment, events and mediality, in: Information, Communication & Society 19: 3, 307-324. <i>Tufekci, Zeynep/Wilson, Christopher</i> 2012: Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations From Tahrir Square, in: Journal of Communication 62: 2, 363-379. <i>Pamment, James</i> 2016: Digital diplomacy as transmedia engagement: Aligning theories of participatory culture with international advocacy campaigns, in: New Media & Society 18: 9, 2046-2062.

Phase 5: Time to Act: Protest Online and Offline	
Short description There has been a huge debate on whether the facilitating of organizing and communicating protest via digital tools helps or hurts. In the last phase we will look at how social media shape direct action either online or offline. We will discuss whether lowering the entry barrier leads to slacktivism or motivates to participate ever greater number of people. Furthermore we will discuss how hacktivism and other forms of online protest change the repertoire of social movement actors.	Learning aims <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media effects on turnout and longevity of protests • Digital direct actions strategies • Potential drawbacks of social media strategies
Method Seminar session in Adobe Connect, forum discussions and individual readings	Medium for communication Moodle / Adobe Connect
Tasks (step by step) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a 2 page summary of your social media campaign • Read the assigned material • Participate in the webinar session • Participate in the forum discussions 	Notes for tasks
Time period 2 weeks (27.03-09.04)	Total estimated study hours 5 hours
Material <i>Van Laer, Jeroen/Van Aelst, Peter</i> 2009: Cyber-Protest and Civil Society: The Internet and Action Repertoires in Social Movement, in: Jewkes, Yvonne/Yar, Majid (Hrsg.): Handbook on Internet Crime, Oxfordshire, 230-254. <i>Celikates, Robin</i> 2015: Digital Publics, Digital Contestation. A New Structural	Extra help: <i>Tufekci, Zeynep/Wilson, Christopher</i> 2012: Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations From Tahrir Square, in: Journal of Communication 62: 2, 363-379. <i>Baringhorst, Sigrid</i> 2008: Political Protest on the Net, in: German Policy Studies 4: 4, 63-93. <i>Milan, Stefania</i> 2015: Hacktivism As a Radical Media Practice, in: Atton, Chris (Hrsg.): Routledge Companion to Alternative and Community Media, London, 550-560.



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Transformation of the Public Sphere?, in: Celikates, Robin, et al. (Hrsg.):
Transformations of Democracy, Washington, 159-174.

Harlow, Summer/Harp, Dustin 2012: Collective Action on the Web, in: Information, Communication
& Society 15: 2, 196-216.

Howard, Philip N./Muzammil, Hussain M. 2011: The Role of Digital Media, in: Journal of
Democracy 22: 3, 35-48.

Kigler-Vilenchik, Neta/Thorson, Kjerstin 2016: Good citizenship as a frame contest: Kony2012,
memes, and critiques of the networked citizen, in: New Media & Society 18: 9, 1993-
2011.

6. Additional Material/Literature

- *Askanius, Tina/Gustafsson, Nils* 2009: Mainstreaming the Alternative: The Changing Media Practices of Protest Movements, in: *Interface* 2: 2, 23-41.
- *Benkler, Yochai* 2006: *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*, New Haven.
- *Bennett, Lance W.* 2003: Communicating Global Activism, in: *Information, Communication & Society* 6: 2, 143-168.
- *Bennett, Lance W./Seegerberg, Alexandra* 2013: *The Logic of Connective Action*, Cambridge.
- *Beyer, Jessica L.* 2014: *Expect Us. Online Communities and Political Mobilization*, Oxford.
- *Carty, Victoria* 2013: Internet and Social Movements, in: Snow, David, et al. (Hrsg.): *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*.
- *Castells, Manuel* 2012: *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*, London.
- *Della Porta, Donatella/Mosca, Lorenzo* 2005: Global-net for Global Movements?, in: *Journal of Public Policy* 25: 1, 165-190.
- *Earl, Jennifer* 2006: Pursuing Social Change Online: The Use of Four Protest Tactics on the Internet, in: *SSCR* 24, 362-377.
- *Earl, Jennifer* 2013: Spreading the Word or Shaping the Conversation: "Prosumption" in Protest Websites
Research in Social Movements, Conflicts, and Change. 36: 3–38., in: *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts, and Change* 36: 1, 3-38.
- *Franklin, M.I.* 2013: *Digital Dilemmas. Power, Resistance, and the Internet*, Oxford.
- *Garrett, Kelly R.* 2006: Protest in an Information Society, in: *Information, Communication & Society* 9: 2, 202-224.
- *Gerbaudo, Paolo* 2012: *Tweets and the Streets. Social Media and Contemporary Activism*, London.
- *Gunitsky, Seva* 2015: Corrupting the Cyber-Commons: Social Media as a Tool of Autocratic Stability, in: *Perspectives on Politics* 13, 42-54.
- *Howard, Philip N.* 2013: *Democracy's Fourth Wave: Digital Media and the Arab Spring*, Oxford.
- *Juris, Jeffrey S.* 2008: *Networking Futures*, Durham.
- *Lovink, Geert* 2012: *Networks Without a Cause. A Critique of Social Media*, Oxford.
- *Milan, Stefania* 2013: *Social Movements and Their Technologies. Wiring Social Change*, Basingstoke.
- *Morozov, Evgeny* 2011: *The Net Delusion*, London.
- *Papacharissi, Zizi* 2015: *Affective Publics. Sentiment, Technology, and Politics*, Oxford.
- *Rheingold, Howard* 2002: *Smart Mobs. The Next Social Revolution*, Cambridge, MA.
- *Sauter, Molly* 2014: *The Coming Swarm: DDOS Actions, Hacktivism, and Civil Disobedience on the Internet*, New York.
- *Van Laer, Jeroen/Van Aelst, Peter* 2010: Internet and Social Movement Action Repertoires: Opportunities and Limitations, in: *Information, Communication & Society*.
- *Zuckerman, Ethan* 2013: *Rewire: Digital Cosmopolitans in the Age of Connection*, New York.

7. Formalities (grading policy and evaluation criteria)

The criteria for successful participation are:

- (1) Active participation of students beyond questions and answers. They ought to connect the content of the course to personal experience and current campaigns/debates;
- (2) A short (written) presentation of a social media campaign or actor (Phase 3)

Additional possibilities

- (3) An oral presentation in Phase 4 or Phase 5 either on one of the mentioned topics or on something agreed on with the course instructor. Presentations should be 20-30 minutes and based on a serious literature review (help will be provided in choosing the right texts)
- (4) An essay on either a theoretical topic or an analysis of a campaign (must be different from the one presented in phase 3)