

# Today

- Twitter: what is it? Main features.
- Introduction to the Twitter API
- Capturing your own collection of tweets
- Analyzing Twitter data
- Tweet coding: training and details about task
- In-class exercise: collect and analyze your own Twitter data

## └ Today

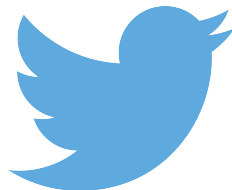
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## Approximate timing of Lab 2

- Introduction to Twitter = 15 minutes
- Introduction to the Twitter API = 15 minutes
- Capturing your own collection of tweets = 30 minutes
- BREAK = 10 minutes
- Analyzing Twitter data = 30 minutes
- In-class exercise = 20 minutes

# Twitter's numbers

- 320+ million monthly active users
- 500+ million tweets are sent everyday
- 18% of online U.S. adults use Twitter
- 25% of young adults in US (18-29) report using Twitter actively
- 52% of Twitter users get news through this platform
- 95% of Members of U.S. Congress have a Twitter account
- 77% of the governments of U.N. member countries have a presence on Twitter



## Social Media and Political Participation

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Even if Twitter was created less than 8 years ago (in 2006), it has become a massive global phenomenon. These numbers indicate how large it is. Probably the second largest social network after Facebook.

What's interesting about it is not only how many people use it, but also *how* they use: many important political actors are present, and people use it a lot to become informed about politics, and to get engaged in political conversations.

# Twitter's main features

The screenshot displays the Twitter interface with the following elements:

- Navigation Bar:** Home, Moments, Notifications, Messages, and a search bar.
- User Profile (Sean Kates):**
  - Profile picture and name: Sean Kates (@SKates5350)
  - Stats: 35 Tweets, 298 Following, 22 Followers
  - Trends: #Star (45.3K Tweets), #SeizeTheDayBy (5,861 Tweets), #ThursdayThought (11.6K Tweets), #BLMKidnapping (293K Tweets), #BadGrittyReboots, #NationalBirdDay (1,011 Tweets), #MarijuanaFunFacts (4,855 Tweets), The Anti-Inauguration
- What's happening?**
  - Retweet by Brendan Nyhan of a tweet by Adam Smith (@asmith83) from 2 hours ago. The tweet states: "Five weeks ago today Trump said he'd hold a press conference to talk about his conflicts and still no plan."
  - Tweet by Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump): "I will be holding a major news conference in New York City with my children on December 15 to discuss the fact that I will be leaving my ..."
  - Retweet by John Pollock (@John\_Pollock22) from 1 hour ago. The tweet states: "Hard to disagree w/ @stephenkb here, maybe #TheresaMay is being v clear and we don't like the answer? #Brexit newstatesman.com/politics/stagg..."
  - A large text block below the retweet: "based on what ministers *haven't* ruled out: that is, continuing to pay money to the European Union after we've left. Or, to translate it into Vote Leave speak:"
- Who to follow:**
  - Donna Yates (@DrDonna...)
  - Josepharthur (@josephart...)
  - Emine Deniz (@ed947nyu) followed by Saad Gulzar and others
- Footer:** © 2017 Twitter, About, Help, Terms, Privacy, Cookies, Ads info, Brand, Blog, Status, Apps, Jobs, Businesses, Media, Developers, Advertise with Twitter

2017-01-05

# Social Media and Political Participation

## Twitter

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This is what a Twitter timeline looks like.

So you see tweets in chronologically inverse order, with the screen name and picture of who sent it.

On the left, there are my statistics, and also the trending topics.

# The offline effects of Twitter

- ① Twitter metrics can predict real-world outcomes:
  - Box-office revenue, spread of flu, happiness and general mood, epicenter of earthquakes... even the winner of 'American Idol'.
- ② Studies show that different Twitter metrics were correlated with election results in many countries.
  - BUT: "the predictive power of Twitter regarding elections has been greatly exaggerated" (Gayo-Avello, 2012)
- ③ Social media solve collective action problems, facilitate information diffusion, and thus foster spread of protest.
  - Arab Spring: "The revolutions were tweeted?"
  - Necessary or sufficient cause? Lack of rigorous empirical work
- ④ Twitter and word-of-mouth marketing

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  - ◆ Arab Spring: "The revolutions were tweeted?"
  - ◆ Necessary or sufficient cause? Lack of rigorous empirical work
- ◆ Twitter and word-of-mouth marketing

So why do we care so much about Twitter that we're going to spend so much time talking about it?

The most important reason is that Twitter, as other social media, is not something that stays online. It has a lot of important offline consequences; it is a reflection of offline activities, because what a lot of people forget is that it's human beings behind their social media profiles.

Twitter gives us access to online traces of human behavior, which we can measure and quantify to predict offline events. A lot of literature on this. In particular, many studies have shown that Twitter metrics are correlated with election outcomes. Although there are some critics.

Twitter, and social media in general, have been associated to the spread of protest. The most relevant example being the Arab Spring. The idea is that Twitter can solve collective action problems, because it facilitates the spread of information (it's cheaper and easier to get access to it), and it can also help coordination (for example, people can organize protest on a Facebook page, or around a Twitter hashtag). But of course it's unclear how this is happening.

In marketing, a lot of literature also on how people turn to Twitter to talk about products they like. Most successful example: airlines.



# Twitter and social science research

Most studies on the effects of social media so far have used Twitter data. Why?

- Presence of many influential actors (journalists, politicians, celebrities...). Spillover effects.
- Effort by political campaigns to generate users' engagement
- Public nature: facilitates access to tweets with the API, and generates dynamics of competition and public expression
- Academic research has shown connection to offline behavior

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## Comparing Twitter with other social media sites, why so much emphasis on Twitter?

1. most important actors are present, directly or indirectly. What they do on Twitter has implications online. For example, Hasan Rouhani in Iran turned to Twitter to announce a conversation with Barack Obama, and also an agreement on their nuclear program.
2. A lot of political campaigns focus on generate many tweets. Mexico, Korea, even US.
3. Very easy to access tweets. Also through trending topics and hashtags, there is competition.
4. As shown before... connection to offline behavior.