

HSS 313: Digital Media and Democracy
Fall 2023
Tue Thu 9:00–10:15AM
N4, School of Digital Humanities and Computational Social Sciences

Instructor: Taegyoon Kim, Ph.D. in Political Science and Social Data Analytics

- Email: taegyoon.academic@gmail.com
- Office hours: Tue Thu 10:15–11:00AM & By appointment
- Course webpage: https://github.com/taegyoon-kim/dem_digital_23fw
- Personal webpage: <https://taegyoon-kim.github.io>

Teaching Assistant: Myokyung Han

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Course Overview: This course offers a comprehensive exploration of the dynamic relationship between digital media, especially social platforms, and democratic governance. Students will delve into the ways in which modern ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) intersect with crucial political outcomes. These outcomes include—but not limited to—protest dynamics, censorship and surveillance practices, the supply, demand, spread of fake news, political polarization, and inter-group relations. Through lectures, in-class discussions, collaborative work with peers, and conducting and presenting case studies, students will develop the critical ability to interpret how the rise of digital media shapes the intricate workings of democracy in various contemporary societies.

Readings: We do not strictly follow a text book. The main reference used in the course is Persily and Tucker (2020), which is available for free [link]. Depending on the topic of the week, journal articles or news reports can be assigned instead. Students are expected to read the assigned reading prior to class and be prepared to actively engage in discussion. See below for weekly readings (subject to change).

Major Tasks: Students are expected to complete the following tasks.

- *Attendance:* Students are required to attend all lectures unless they have exceptional circumstances that they have discussed with the instructor beforehand. When arrive in class, check in with the TA. See below for additional information. Worth 10% of the final grade.
- *Response memo:* Students are expected to read the assigned reading(s) and submit a concise response memo with questions and comments (at least a paragraph). These memos will be discussed during Tuesday classes. Students will write up to 10 memos throughout the course, and each response memo must be **emailed to the instructor in PDF by 4PM on Mondays**. Worth 25% of the final grade.
- *Case presentation:* Throughout the course, each student will be tasked with delivering two individual presentations, each lasting approximately 10 minutes (including a quick Q&A session).¹ These presentations will focus on presenting a case study (e.g., Telegram in Myanmar) related to the phenomenon being studied in the week (e.g., censorship and surveillance). Building on various resources such as academic research and news reports (e.g., research on censorship of encrypted messaging apps by authoritarian government), students will overview the case (e.g., censorship of Telegram in Myanmar) including discussions of a) why this case matters and b) what it tells us about what we learned in the Tuesday class. The objective is to provide the class with a deeper understanding of how the phenomenon unfold in various contexts and what it tells about relevant theories. Worth 30% of the final grade. **Please read the instructions and sign up here starting from Sep 5th**. Slides should be **emailed to the teaching assistant (instructor cc'd) by 8:00am on the day of presentation**.
- *Team project:* Students will be divided into several teams, and each team will choose a country (e.g., U.S., China, South Korea, Japan, Germany, Russia, etc.). Their objective will be to analyze how the use of digital media impacts various key aspects of the politics in that chosen country, focusing on substantive themes explored in the course, such as protest, censorship, polarization, and more. In the penultimate week of the course (Dec 5th & 7th), each team will present their project for approximately 25 minutes, including a 5-minute Q&A session. Finally, a final report, consisting of 4000–6000 words (except for figures and tables), should be **emailed to the instructor in PDF by the end of the semester (Dec 14th 11:59pm)**. Worth 35% of the final grade.

¹Note that the number of presentations and time for each presentation might change depending on the course size.

Grading Scale: Grade values will not be rounded. That is, any grade value that is greater than or equal to ‘Lower’ and less than ‘Upper’ will receive the respective grade.

Grade	Lower	Upper
A+	90	101
A ₀	87	90
A-	84	87
B+	81	84
B ₀	78	81
B-	75	78
C+	72	75
C ₀	69	72
C-	66	69
D+	63	66
D ₀	60	63
D-	57	60
F	0	57

Course Schedule:

Week 1. Warm-up I (Aug 29 & 31)

- Tue: Course overview, logistics, etc.
- Thu: Overview of themes, introducing media consumption analysis, team assignment

Week 2. Warm-up II (Sep 5 & 7)

- Tue: What is social science research, and how to read it? (Brancati and Huck)
- Thu: team assignment, ice breaking, media consumption discussion

Week 3. Protest and collective action (Sep 12 & 14)

- Jost, Barberá, Bonneau, Langer, Metzger, Nagler, Sterling and Tucker (2018)

Week 4. Censorship and surveillance (Sep 19 & 21)

- Kendall-Taylor, Frantz and Wright (2020)

Week 5–6: Supply and demand of misinformation (Sep 26 & Oct 5)

- Guess and Lyons (2020)
- No class on Sep 28 (Chuseok) and Oct 3 (Gaecheonjeol)

Week 7. Correcting misinformation (Oct 10 & 12)

- Wittenberg and Berinsky (2020)

Week 8. Mid-term examination period (Oct 17 & 19)

- No class

Week 9. Guest lecture & proposal presentation (Oct 24 & 26)

- Tue: Guess lecture (TBD)
- Thu: Team project proposal presentation

Week 10. Echo chambers and polarization (Oct 31 & Nov 2)

- Barberá (2020)

Week 11. Incivility, hate speech, and violence (Nov 7 & 9)

- Siegel (2020)

Week 12. Various modes of digital communication (Nov 14 & 16)

- Asbury-Kimmel, Chang, McCabe, Munger and Ventura (2021)

Week 13. Digital literacy (Nov 21 & 23)

- Guess and Munger (2023)

Week 14. Artificial Intelligence and democracy (Nov 28 & 30)

- Jungherr (2023)

Week 15. Final presentation (Dec 5 & 7)

- Team project final presentation

Week 16. Final examination period (Dec 12 & 14)

- No class

Syllabus Change Policy: This syllabus is a guide, and every attempt will be made to provide an accurate overview of the course. However, circumstances and events may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester and may depend, in part, on the progress, needs, and experiences of the students.

Instruction Mode: The instruction mode is in-person. However, depending on the public health challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, some classes might be offered remotely. Any change to the mode of instruction will be announced in advance.

Attendance: Consistent attendance is essential for this course. You are permitted to miss a maximum of two classes without any impact on your grade. However, should you exceed this limit and miss additional classes, a deduction of two points will be applied to your attendance score for each absence. There is no obligation to notify the instructor in advance if you cannot attend a class unless you are presenting in that class. Please be aware that arriving more than 20 minutes late will be considered as an absence for that particular class.

Email Policy: I try to respond to emails promptly, typically within two business days. If you have complex questions or need an in-depth discussion, I encourage you to attend my office hours.

Office Hours: I welcome all students to attend my office hours for discussions related to course content and learning strategies. If you need to set up a meeting outside my office hours, send me an email with your availability, and we will arrange a mutually convenient time to meet.

Late Submission Policy: Late submissions will incur a penalty of 10% for each day (rounded up) beyond the due date

Academic Integrity: As students at KAIST, you are entrusted with upholding the utmost standards of academic integrity. Academic honesty is paramount, and any form of misconduct, such as plagiarism and free-riding in team work, is strictly prohibited. In the event of suspected misconduct, our class adheres to the established policy of KAIST. All such incidents are promptly reported to the dean of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences to ensure a fair and transparent resolution.

Grade Dispute Memo: Should any student want to contest a grade received on the response note, theme presentation, and team project, they have the option to do so by submitting a written memo. The memo must specifically outline the reasons why the assignment warrants a different grade. The memo must then be submitted within seven days of receiving the grade. Submissions should be sent via email for consideration.

References

- Asbury-Kimmel, Victoria, Keng-Chi Chang, Katherine T McCabe, Kevin Munger and Tiago Ventura. 2021. “The Effect of Streaming Chat on Perceptions of Political Debates.” *Journal of Communication* 71(6):947–974.
- Barberá, Pablo. 2020. “Social media, echo chambers, and political polarization.” *Social media and democracy: The state of the field, prospects for reform* 34.
- Guess, Andrew M and Benjamin A Lyons. 2020. “Misinformation, disinformation, and online propaganda.” *Social media and democracy: The state of the field, prospects for reform* 10.
- Guess, Andrew M and Kevin Munger. 2023. “Digital literacy and online political behavior.” *Political science research and methods* 11(1):110–128.
- Jost, John T, Pablo Barberá, Richard Bonneau, Melanie Langer, Megan Metzger, Jonathan Nagler, Joanna Sterling and Joshua A Tucker. 2018. “How social media facilitates political protest: Information, motivation, and social networks.” *Political psychology* 39:85–118.
- Jungherr, Andreas. 2023. “Artificial Intelligence and Democracy: A Conceptual Framework.” *Social Media+ Society* 9(3):20563051231186353.
- Kendall-Taylor, Andrea, Erica Frantz and Joseph Wright. 2020. “The digital dictators: How technology strengthens autocracy.” *Foreign Aff.* 99:103.
- Persily, Nathaniel and Joshua A Tucker. 2020. “Social media and democracy: The state of the field, prospects for reform.”.
- Siegel, Alexandra A. 2020. “Online hate speech.” *Social media and democracy: The state of the field, prospects for reform* pp. 56–88.
- Wittenberg, Chloe and Adam J Berinsky. 2020. “Misinformation and its correction.” *Social media and democracy: The state of the field, prospects for reform* 163.