

Experimental College Spring 2008
Tufts University

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**DIGITAL DEMOCRACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY:
INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONES IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE**

Tuesdays, 6-8:30pm, Murrow Room, The Fletcher School

COURSE DESCRIPTION

How does the Internet affect politics? In the last five years, text message campaigns, online social networks, and citizen media have played a major role in world events including a democratic revolution in the Ukraine, a humanitarian emergency in Kenya, a terrorism attack in Mumbai and the election of the first African American President of the United States. This course explores how digital technology changes both the mode and the meaning of democratic participation. We will conduct this inquiry through the exploration of case studies and readings and put an experimental social networking application to the test by exploring its use in a variety of civic projects throughout Boston.

OUR ROLE

Each class will combine material presented through a variety of multimedia sources, class discussion, interactive projects and guest speakers. Our role will be to facilitate these discussions, and to provide guidance of planning implementation of the Youthmap projects.

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Josh is a second-year masters candidate at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He works in Google's Office of Global Public Policy and at Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society. His main research interests are how digital/networked technologies affect economic development and political change, with a regional focus on sub-Saharan Africa. He has recently published in Princeton's *Journal of Public and International Affairs* and Harvard's *Berkman Center Working Paper Series*. He blogs at inanafricanminute.blogspot.com.

Patrick is a PhD Candidate at The Fletcher School and the Director for Applied Research at DigiActive.org. His dissertation focuses on the use of new media by digital activists and pro-democracy movements in repressive environments. Patrick has presented his research at multiple conferences worldwide and given interviews for The Economist, Voice of America and German Television. Patrick has a Masters Degree from Columbia University's School of International Affairs (SIPA) and is the author of iRevolution.wordpress.com.

Final Papers

Student final papers have two parts. One part discusses their own work on YouthMap for the semester and their reflections on the project. The other part discusses the broader issue of digital democracy. Links between the two parts are encouraged.

Homework includes doing some research on possible topics to report back to the group on Jan 27. Students should answer these questions:

- What partner organization(s) in the community would be interested in this study?
- How would the study/project be defined?
- What are some initial hypotheses for the research?
- What methods would students use to collect data?
- What practical value would their map have?
- What kinds of products/events/activities would students produce by the end?

Writing Resources:

Being able to produce clear and forceful prose is a critical life skill regardless of your career choice. We recommend the following guides:

- William Zinsser, "On Writing Well"
- William I. Struck Jr and E.B. White, "The Elements of Style"

Staying Current:

Paying attention to news in the digital democracy world is not required, but it will help you understand the issues in this course.

- Digital Democracy: <http://www.drwo.org>
 - Center for Digital Democracy: <http://www.democraticmedia.org>
 - Personal Democracy: <http://www.techpresident.com>
 - Democracy Resource Center: <http://democracyresourcecenter.blogspot.com>
 - Open Democracy: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/idea>
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SYLLABUS OUTLINE

Please note that readings denoted with a “*” are required. Those denoted with a “•” are suggested readings only. Both sets of readings are generally available on-line.

SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

JANUARY 20

In this session we discuss the course and syllabus. Students are invited to introduce themselves and discuss their interests in the subject of digital democracy. We then discuss different concepts of democracy as a preview to the following session.

- * **Blog Post:** The Prospects for Cyberocracy
<http://irevolution.wordpress.com/2009/01/17/the-prospects-for-cyberocracy>
- * **Chapter:** Yochai Benkler (2006), “The Wealth of Networks (Yale University Press, New Haven), Chapter 1
<http://www.congo-education.net/wealth-of-networks/ch-01.htm>

SESSION 2: AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

JANUARY 27

The Obama campaign is widely known as the most successful online political campaign. We will examine how the campaign used interactive tools to connect supporters with similar interests, organize volunteers and raise millions of dollars. How much of Obama’s success was the result of these tools, and how much would have happened without them?

- * **Article:** How Obama's Internet Campaign Changed Politics (NYT, 11/7/08)
<http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/how-obamas-internet-campaign-changed-politics/>
- * **Blog Post:** The New Organizers
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zack-exley/the-new-organizers-part-1_b_132782.html
- * **Blog Post:** The Internet’s Effect on Politics
<http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/palfrey/2004/12/10/working-hypothesis-v20/>
- * **Article:** Cass Sunstein, “The Daily We,” (Boston Review, 2001)
<http://www.bostonreview.net/BR26.3/sunstein.html>

Students share the ideas for YouthMap projects, refine them, and settle on three or four projects to do during the semester. In class, they develop plans and timetables. Homework includes putting the plans and timetables on the map—at least three nodes per student.

SESSION 3: GLOBAL DEMOCRACY

FEBRUARY 3

Citizen journalism, mass-SMS messaging and online organizing forums certainly played a role in Ukraine's Orange Revolution, while next door in Belarus a similar revolutionary attempt was brutally crushed. To what extent does access to digital technology lead to democracy?

- * **Report:** Joshua Goldstein (2007): "Digital Networked Technology in Ukraine's Orange Revolution (Internet & Democracy Case Study Series, Berkman Center for Internet and Society Paper, Cambridge: MA).

http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/publications/2007/The_Role_of_Digital_Networked_Technologies_in_the_Ukrainian_Orange_Revolution

- * **Report:** Joshua Goldstein (2008): "Digital Networked Technology in Kenya's 2007-08 President Election Crisis (Internet & Democracy Case Study Series, Berkman Center for Internet and Society Paper, Cambridge: MA).

http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/publications/2008/Digitally_Networked_Technology_Kenyas_Post-Election_Crisis

- * **Article:** Rioters of the World United (Economist)

http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story_id=12815678

In class, students review the data they have collected and put on the map and refine their plans and timelines. Homework includes adding at least 3-5 more nodes per student.

SESSION 4: MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

FEBRUARY 10

Foreign reporting is on the retreat. Some of the world's largest news outlets such as the Associated Press (AP) are closing down their overseas bureaus. At the same time, the world is witnessing the rise of citizen journalism as evidenced by the recent coverage of the riots in Greece, terrorist attacks in Mumbai and protests in Iran, Tibet and Morocco. What does this mean for the future of media and democracy?

- * **Short Report:** Wilson, Ernest (2008). "Digital Media, Democracy and Diversity." (Media Re:public, Berkman Center for Internet and Society Paper, Cambridge: MA). [5 pages]

- * **Online Video:** Panel Discussion on Decline of Foreign Reporting and Rise of Citizen Journalism (Board of Broadcasting Governors). Listen to introduction & opening remarks:

<http://www.bbg.gov/pressroom/pressreleases-article.cfm?articleID=333>

- * **Online Video:** New Media in Authoritarian Societies (Open Society Institute). Listen to talks by Evgeny Morozov and Ethan Zuckerman:

http://www.soros.org/initiatives/fellowship/events/media_20081121

Students interact in an appropriate way with peers at UMass Boston who are also doing YouthMap projects. Mode of interaction might be videoconference, f2f meeting, wiki, or other online tools. Homework includes communication with the UMass-Boston team.

SESSION 5: GUEST SPEAKER – DIGITAL DEMOCRACY (D 2.0)**FEBRUARY 18**

The co-founders of the NGO Digital Democracy, Emily Jacobi and Mark Belinski, will give a presentation on their recent work on youth activism and democracy in Burma. [Please note this lecture will currently scheduled on a Wednesday, not a Tuesday].

SESSION 6: BLOGGERS RIGHTS**FEBRUARY 24**

In regimes with a tight grip on traditional media, bloggers often present a unique venue for speaking truth to power. However, increasingly, regimes are imprisoning bloggers who speak out. In fact, more bloggers than journalists are currently in prison across the globe.

- * **Blog Post:** Yahoo! Helps Imprison Chinese Dissidents
<http://www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/2006/02/09/yahoo-helps-imprison-chinese-dissident>
- * **Blog Post:** Iran- A Long and Painful Story of Jailed Bloggers
<http://advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/2008/12/19/iran-a-long-and-painful-story-of-jailed-bloggers>

Class time is devoted to reviewing the emerging map and refining plans for more interviews & data collection. Focus now on using the map for analytical purposes.

SESSION 7: DIGITAL CENSORSHIP AND DEMOCRACY**MARCH 3**

Does the impact of the information revolution empower coercive regimes at the expense of pro-democracy movements or vice versa? The answer to this question largely depends on how effective government censorship efforts are in contrast to circumvention efforts by civil society groups.

- * **Report:** Faris, Robert and Nart Villeneuve (2008). “Measuring Global Internet Filtering,” Chapter 1 in Diebert, Ronald *et. al* (Eds), *Access Denied: The Practice and Policy of Global Internet Filtering* (MIT Press: Cambridge). Available online at: <http://opennet.net/accessdenied>

Students continue to add nodes to map. Spend class time discussing progress and plans. Homework includes checking in with community partner organizations about the value and direction of their work.

SESSION 8: HUMAN RIGHTS 2.0 AND DEMOCRACY**MARCH 10**

Respect for human rights tends to be an important feature of democracies. How does digital technology change the field of human rights and by consequence the nature of democracies? In this session we draw on Witness.org and Ushahidi as case studies to demonstrate the impact of Human Rights 2.0.

- * **Blog Post:** Human Rights 2.0 – What’s in a Name?
<http://irevolution.wordpress.com/2008/04/08/human-rights-20-whats-in-a-name>
- * **Blog Post:** Crisis Mapping Kenya’s Post-Election Violence
<http://irevolution.wordpress.com/2008/10/23/mapping-kenyas-election-violence>

Homework is to begin working on final projects.

SESSION 9: DIGITAL ACTIVISM**MARCH 24**

In this session, we present the work of DigiActive, one of the leading non-profit initiatives dedicated to helping grassroots activists around the world use the Internet and mobile phones to increase their political impact. DigiActive’s goal is a world of activists made more powerful and more effective through the use of digital technology.

- * **Guide:** Schultz, Dan (2008). “A DigiActive Introduction to Facebook Activism.” (DigiActive Strategy Guide).
- * **Online Video:** What is Digital Activism?
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TqJEQTX7xkU>

SESSION 10: DIGITAL RESISTANCE**MARCH 31**

In this session we look at the intersection between digital technology and civil resistance within the context of pro-democracy movements. We discuss two real world case studies: the Otport student movement against Milosevic and the Orange Revolution. The session will include the screening of the award-winning documentary, “Bringing Down a Dictator”.

- * **Report:** Martin, Brian (2001). Technology for Nonviolent Struggle (War Resisters International, London). [Chapters 1 & 3, 10-pages]

Around this time there should be a second check-in with the UMass Boston students.

SESSION 11: DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD**APRIL 7**

Perhaps surprisingly, African technologists are world leaders in mobile phone application development. In this class, we explore Africa's new competitive advantage in the digital technology industry, and what it means for reaching economic development, poverty alleviation and other social goals.

- * **Blog Post:** If It Works In Africa, It Will Work Anywhere
<http://whiteafrican.com/2008/09/26/if-it-works-in-africa-it-will-work-anywhere>
- * **Online Video:** George Ayittey- Cheetahs vs. Hippos for Africa's Future
http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/george_ayittey_on_cheetahs_vs_hippos.html
- * **Report:** Joshua Goldstein (2008): "Digital Networked Technology in Kenya's 2007-08 Post-Election Crisis (Internet & Democracy Case Study Series, Berkman Center for Internet and Society Paper, Cambridge: MA)
http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/publications/2008/Digitally_Networked_Technology_Kenyas_Post-Election_Crisis

SESSION 12 & 13: CLASS PRESENTATIONS**APRIL 14 & 21**

In-class presentations ...