

Exam MEVIT 4320 Autumn 2019

Exam question

Van Elst et al (2017) note that “ordinary citizens have been empowered by the very same changes that in other respects might undermine one fundamental element of political information environments in democracies: the extent to which they aid citizens in becoming informed about politics and current affairs” (4). Present an argument for whether these changes have been primarily empowering or disabling for citizens. Include reflections on implications of such a development for the media’s role in a democratic society.

SENSOR GUIDELINES, MEVIT4320 Autumn 2019

Teaching

The course is based on seven lectures and seven (mandatory) seminars. The lectures had the following topics:

1. Introduction: What is political communication? History of the field and key concepts
2. News and political knowledge
3. Social media, selective exposure, polarization, and echo chambers
4. Media and political journalism
5. Populist communication
6. Video Malaise or Virtuous Circle
7. Summing up: political communication today

The seminars have been structured to address the readings associated with each of these topics, emphasizing the theories and concepts that students find most challenging and engaging. Special attention has been given to the six concerns elaborated by Van Aelst et al (2017); the relationship between dynamics fragmentation, selection bias, knowledge gaps, and motivated reasoning; how trends and theories vary across different media systems; how to evaluate the relevance and validity of empirical findings; and the ways in which technological practices and advances challenge or support various theories.

Syllabus

Books

Author/title	Pages
Aalberg, Toril og James Curran (2012) <i>How media inform democracy</i> . London: Routledge. Chapters 1-4, 6-7, 12	109
Davis, Aeron (2019) <i>Political Communication, A New Introduction for Crisis Times</i> 1st Edition,	216
Norris, Pippa (2000) <i>A Virtuous Circle. Political Communication in Postindustrial Societies</i> . Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-3, 9-14	169

Chapters

Author/title	Pages
Esser, F., Stepińska, A., & Hopmann, D. N. (2016). Populism and the Media. Cross-National Findings and Perspectives. In T. Aalberg, F. Esser, C. Reinemann, J. Strömbäck & C. d. Vreese (Eds.), <i>Populist Political Communication in Europe</i> . Routledge, 365-380. Lenke	15
Jupskås, Anders R., Elisabeth Ivarsflaten, Bente Kalsnes, and Toril Aalberg (2016) Norway. Populism From Anti-Tax Movement to Government Party. In T. Aalberg, F. Esser, C. Reinemann, J. Strömbäck & C. d. Vreese (Eds.), <i>Populist Political Communication in Europe</i> . Routledge, 365-380. Lenke	14
Reinemann, C., Esser, F., Strömbäck, J., Vreese, C. de, & Aalberg, T. (2016). Defining Populism and Populist Communication. In T. Aalberg, F. Esser, C. Reinemann, J. Strömbäck & C. d. Vreese (Eds.), <i>Populist Political Communication in Europe</i> . Routledge, 12-25. Lenke	13
Iyengar, Shanto (2017) A typology of media effects. I Kate Kenski og Kathleen Hall Jamieson (red.) <i>The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication</i> . Oxford : Oxford University Press.	11
Stroud, Natalie Jomini (2017) Selective Exposure Theories. I Kate Kenski og Kathleen Hall Jamieson (red.) <i>The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication</i> . Oxford : Oxford University Press.	17

Articles

Forfatter/tittel/tidsskrift	Pages
Aalberg, Toril, Arild Blekesaune, & Eiril Elvestad (2013) Media Choice and Informed Democracy: Toward Increasing News Consumption Gaps in Europe? <i>International Journal of Press/Politics</i> 18:281–303. Doi:10.1177/1940161213485990	23
Fletcher, Richard & Rasmus Kleis Nielsen (2017) Are News Audiences Increasingly Fragmented? A Cross-National Comparative Analysis of Cross-Platform News Audience Fragmentation and Duplication. <i>Journal of Communication</i> . 67(4): 476-498.	23
Karlsen, Rune (2015) Followers Are Opinion Leaders: The Role of People in the Flow of Political Communication on and Beyond Social Networking Sites. <i>European Journal of Communication</i> 30:301–18. Doi10.1177/0267323115577305	17
Karlsen, Rune, Kari Steen-Johnsen, Dag Wollebæk & Bernard Enjolras (2017) Echo Chamber and Trench Warfare Dynamics in Online Debates. <i>European Journal of Communication</i> . 32(3) 257- 273. DOI: 10.1177/0267323117695734	18
Prior, Marcus (2005) News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps In Political Knowledge and Turnout. <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 49(3): 577–92.	15
Strömbäck, Jesper, Monika Djerf-Pierre & Adam Shehata (2016) A Question of Time? A Longitudinal Analysis of the Relationship between News Media Consumption and Political Trust. <i>The International Journal of Press/Politics</i> 21(1) 88-110.	22
van Aelst, Peter, Jesper Strömbäck, Toril Aalberg, Frank Esser, Claes de Vreese, Jörg Matthes, David Hopmann, Susana Salgado, Nicolas Hubé, Agnieszka Stepińska, Stylianos Papathanassopoulos, Rosa Berganza, Guido Legnante, Carsten Reinemann, Tamir Sheafer, and James Stanyer (2017) Political Communication in a High-Choice Media Environment: A Challenge for Democracy? <i>Annals of the International Communication Association</i> 1(1): 3–27.	24
Taber Charles S og Martin Lodge (2006) Motivated skepticism in the evaluation of political beliefs. <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 50(3): 755–769.	15

Zaller, John (2002) New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen, <i>Political Communication</i> , 20:2, 109-130	21
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Paper available on Canvas

Forfatter/tittel	Pages
Karlsen, Rune & Aalberg, Toril (2019) Fueling a Distrustful News Audience? The Effect of Facebook on Peoples' News Perceptions. Unpublished manuscript.	23

General requirements for the exam

The exam question is formulated in a way that makes it possible for the students to engage with different aspects of the literature. A typical paper will present an argument about how developments should be understood as primarily empowering or disabling for citizens in a democratic society, and critically discuss this argument in light of theories and empirical studies from the class readings.

This argument could be based on several of contributions included in the reading list. A minimum requirement is to base the argument on theories and/or arguments from the literature (e.g. Virtuous circle, echo chambers, increasing knowledge gaps, or the six points presented by van Aelst et al.) and how this might empower or disempower citizens. A good paper will critically discuss this main argument based on contributions from other parts of the literature. Papers should also consider the democratic role of the media, including the media's role for informing citizens about relevant issues and events for them to fulfill their role as democratic citizens.