COMM270 - Global Digital Activism
Summer Session II

Instructors:
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Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9:00 a.m. -- 11:30 a.m., room TBA
Office hours: TBD based on class preferences

Course overview
This seminar examines the forms, causes, and consequences of global digital activism, defined broadly as activism associated with the use of digital media technologies (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, mobile phones). The goal is to provide students with a tool-kit for analyzing digital activism and to develop a critical understanding of the nature of contemporary activism and its implications for global social change. Major cases to be examined include the "Occupy Wall Street" and "Black Lives Matter" movements in the US, the Arab Spring, the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong, internet activism in China. Students are required to conduct hands-on research on a contemporary case (or form) of digital activism for their final (textual or multimedia) project, which may be completed individually or in small groups.
Part of class time will be devoted to developing research skills that students will be able to apply to other classes and research topics beyond digital activism. Depending on students’ familiarity with different aspects of the research process, we will review citation practices, how to avoid plagiarism, how to select appropriate scholarly and non-scholarly sources, how to make the most of readings, how to select good research questions, etc.

Required readings
All the required readings will be available through Canvas or placed on Course Reserve at the Annenberg Library. We will be using a combination of peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters and (multi)media pieces.

Grading/assessment
Class participation: 15%
Work-in-progress presentation of case study: 25%
Final project: 40%
5 reading quizzes: 20%

Class Participation. I expect you to be a full participant in the class: attendance is thus required. You can miss up to two classes for any reason (I don’t need an excuse). After 2 absences, I will start to deduct points from your participation grade; please use your missed days wisely. Just attending all classes will not translate into the highest participation grade. I also expect you to do the readings in advance and to come to class prepared to discuss and consider other opinions and points of view. And even more importantly, I expect you to be engaged, to participate and to challenge each other, but also to be kind and respectful towards your fellow students and myself.

Research Proposal. The final project for this class is a 10-12 page research proposal. You can choose to work individually or in small groups (to be determined based on the size of the class). The research
The proposal should explain how you would study empirically a case of global digital activism of your choosing. You will be given more details in class about what should be in the proposal. In general, I am looking for a good explanation and contextualization of the case you chose, a discussion of relevant literature about global digital activism, a coherent research question and an explanation of the research methods you would employ to study the case. You will not have to conduct the actual study, just explain how you would do it. The research proposal should build on the work you do for the in-class presentation. The research proposal is due August 3rd at 11:59 pm or earlier, via Canvas. The deadline is still subject to change (= we can talk about it together).

**Work in progress presentations.** We will use a session of the course for in-class student presentations. Each of you will prepare a 10 minutes presentation (PowerPoint not mandatory, but allowed – and you can also be creative!), which will be followed by a 10-15-minute discussion with the class. In this presentation, you should introduce the case of global digital activism that you have decided to study. You should be able to tell us who they are, what they stand for, what they do, how they use digital media, and what is the social and political context in which they operate. You should also explain why you think they are worth studying. In the discussion, the class will be engaged in asking questions to the presenters, but also suggest potential research questions or interesting angles that can be explored in relation to that particular case study. Please note that a part of your grade for this component will also depend on how well you interact with other students’ presentations and whether you offer some constructive feedback and/or thoughtful questions. The goal is to get everyone to be involved and brainstorm potential research projects together.

**Reading quizzes.** Throughout the session you will complete 5 short quizzes (multiple choice, fill in the blank) on the readings to be completed for that session (e.g. the quiz on Wednesday will cover the readings assigned for that Wednesday). These quizzes are not there to trick you, but rather to make sure that we are all covering the basic elements of the readings. *If you thoughtfully complete the readings, you will do well on the quizzes!* I will not count the lowest quiz score towards your final grade.

**Communicating with the instructor.** Get in touch with me via Canvas and/or via email. I will do my best to answer your emails within 24 hours on weekdays. If you don’t hear back from me after 48 hours, write again. I usually don’t respond to emails between 5 pm and 8 am and during weekends. Also make sure you are signed up for notifications from Canvas. You can adjust the settings in Canvas by going to Account > Notifications. It is crucial that you get instant notifications for Announcements (that are sent out to the entire class) and Conversations (i.e. messages that can be specifically directed at you); I strongly suggest you also allow notifications for other activities on Canvas.

**Academic integrity.** I expect students to follow the University of Pennsylvania’s Code of Academic Integrity. Visit [http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ai_codeofacademicintegrity.html](http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ai_codeofacademicintegrity.html) for more information. We will discuss good citation practices and how to avoid plagiarism when we talk about the research process in class.

**Electronic devices policy**

We all live with and through our electronic devices. Unfortunately, academic research shows that laptops make it harder for people to concentrate in the classroom, and this applies not just to students using laptops but also to students sitting behind and next to those using laptops. You should know that my preference is for no laptops/tablets in class, but we will have a laptop policy discussion the first day of class,
and decide as a group how to handle the issue. If any of you feel that you need a laptop to succeed in the class and/or laptop use is part of your disabilities accommodations, please talk to me (in private, too) and we will make it work.

No phones, please. You will have time to check urgent emails/instagram stories/dreadful breaking news/shoe sales during the breaks.

**Accessibility**

Penn provides accommodations to students with disabilities who have self-identified and been approved by the office of Student Disabilities Services (SDS). Please come talk to me about your accommodations and your needs.

If you have not yet contacted SDS, and would like to request accommodations or have questions, you can make an appointment by calling SDS 215.573.9235. The office is located in the Weingarten Learning Resources Center at Stouffer Commons 3702 Spruce Street, Suite 300. All services are confidential.

**Resources on Campus**

I am happy to help you navigate the resources that are available to you on Penn’s Campus, just come talk to me. In addition to Student Disabilities Services (see above), here are some others:

The Office of Learning Resources at the Weingarten Learning Resources Center offers individualized instruction and a variety of workshops to guide Penn students towards more efficient and effective academic study skills and strategies. Professional staff provides free and confidential instruction in areas such as time/project management, academic reading and writing, exam preparation and test-taking strategies, and study strategies. The office is located in Stouffer Commons, 3702 Spruce Street. Stop by to use the study lounge or computer lab or to pick up self-help brochures and semester calendars. To schedule an appointment with a Learning Instructor, call (215) 573-9235 or visit in person.

The Marks Family Writing Center provides writing support to students. You can make an appointment or just show up for drop-in hours: check on the website. The Writing Center is located at 3808 Walnut Street. You can call 215-573-2729.

Counseling and Psychological Service for Students (CAPS) offers a wide range of services including: individual and group counseling and therapy, crisis intervention, structured workshops, psychological testing, medication reviews, and consultation. Services are free to Penn students. What students discuss at CAPS remains private and confidential. CAPS is located at 3624 Market Street. You can call 215.898.7021 (including nights and weekends) or visit https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/caps/.

The Penn Women’s Center offers confidential crisis/options counseling as well as referrals related to a wide range of issues, including gender-based harassment, sexual violence, relationship violence discrimination, parenting issues. Walk-ins are welcome Monday-Friday 10am-4pm; appointments can be scheduled via email vpul-pwc@pobox.upenn.edu or phone 215-898-8611.
Course plan
Readings are subject to change pending discussion in class

Friday, June 29
Introduction to Comm270


Monday, July 2
What is global digital activism? Defining the terms


Wednesday, July 4 – no class

Friday, July 6 - READING QUIZ #1
The long history of digital activism, or why we should care about the printing press


Read one of the following:
Notes from Nowhere. (2003). Indymedia: Don’t hate the media, be the media. In We are everywhere: The irresistible rise of global anticapitalism (pp. 228–243). London and New York: Verso.

or

**Monday, July 9**

**Locating the Arab Spring**


*In class viewing:* “The Square”

**Wednesday, July 11**

**Global indignation: Occupy Wall Street & Indignados**


**Friday, July 13 - READING QUIZ #2**

**Black Lives Matter**


**Monday, July 16**

**Methods & Ethics for global digital activism research**
This class will run in a workshop seminar. Readings will be determined by students’ methodological interests as discussed in class.

Mandatory reading for all:


**Wednesday, July 18**

**WORK-IN-PROGRESS STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**

**Friday, July 20 - READING QUIZ #3**

#MeToo and feminist digital activism


**Monday, July 23**

**Digital activism in non-democratic contexts**


**Wednesday, July 25**

**Internet policy activism**


Friday, July 27 – READING QUIZ #4
Satire and culture jamming as activism


Monday, July 30
Right-wing digital activism


Wednesday, August 1 – READING QUIZ #5
The dark side of digital activism: surveillance, harassment, commodification


Optional:


Friday, August 3
Back to theory & wrap up
