

**CSPL 317Z Social and Political Perspectives on Digital Media
Summer 2020**

Syllabus

with Dr Lauren Rosewarne
www.laurenrosewarne.com
(e) lrosewarne@wesleyan.edu
(t) [@laurenrosewarne](https://www.instagram.com/laurenrosewarne) (f) [/lauren.rosewarne](https://www.facebook.com/lauren.rosewarne)

Document Contents

1. Instructor Introduction	Page 2
2. Course Overview	Page 2
3. Assessment and Lateness Penalties	Page 2
4. Class Topics and Assigned Readings	
Module 1: Introduction to Social Media.....	Page 3
Module 2: Social Media and Social Activism.....	Page 3
Module 3: Social Media and Political Campaigning.....	Page 4
Module 4: Social Media and the Democratization of News.....	Page 5
Module 5: Social Media and Community Building.....	Page 5
Module 6: Social Media and Intimacy.....	Page 6
Module 7: Social Media and Identity Construction.....	Page 7
Module 8: Social Media and Fake News.....	Page 7
Module 9: Social Media and Hate Speech.....	Page 8
Module 10: Social Media and Terrorist Networks.....	Page 9
Module 11: Social Media and Gendered Harassment.....	Page 9
Module 12: Social Media and Public Shaming.....	Page 10
5. Attendance	Page 11
6. Time Commitment	Page 11
7. Discrimination and Harassment	Page 11
8. Honor Code	Page 11
9. Students with Disabilities	Page 11
10. Extra Resources	Page 11
11. Title IX	Page 11

1. Instructor Introduction

Dr Lauren Rosewarne is a Senior Lecturer and Director of Political Science in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Melbourne, Australia. In 2015, she was a Visiting Scholar at the University of Connecticut, USA and in 2011 was a Visiting Scholar at the University of Massachusetts. She currently teaches in the areas of political science and gender studies and writes, comments and speaks on a wide variety of topics including gender, sexuality, politics, public policy, social media, pop culture and technology. Lauren has authored eleven books as well as many chapters, essays and articles – more information is available on her website: www.laurenrosewarne.com.

2. Course Overview

This course examines the intersection between social media, politics and society, analyzing platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram to understand their role in our lives, in our political discourse and in shaping our culture. We examine the positives of social media including social activism, the democratization of news, and heightened capacities for community, communication and connectivity. We also delve into the darker side of these platforms, exploring the proliferation of fake news, hate speech, terrorist networks and gendered issues including trolling and cyber-harassment. This is an interdisciplinary course and in it we will draw upon a broad range of social theories including science and technology studies, communication theory, linguistics, cultural studies, and media studies to understand the complex role of digital media in contemporary society.

Class Times: This course will be taught exclusively online and the teaching is asynchronous: this means that can learn at your own pace, at your own time. All class materials will be available on Moodle prior to the commencement of the course on Monday June 29.

Class Venue: n/a

Office Hours: Zoom, Skype or Phone by appointment

3. Assessment and Lateness Penalties

Summary

Your mark in this subject is based on the written assessment. You have two options for written assessment:

Option 1: One essay of 4,000 words due at the end of the study period on or before **Thursday July 30**.

Option 2: Two essays, each of 2,000 words due by the end of the study period on or before **Thursday July 30**.

To pass this subject students are also expected to participate in regular online activities that will be detailed on Moodle.

For the essay, students can devise their own questions or select one of the *Key Questions* listed for each module or on the approved list on Moodle.

All assignments should be submitted to Lauren as a Microsoft Word attachments (.doc or .docx).

You can use any legitimate referencing style – Harvard, APA, Chicago etc – just make sure that whichever style you use adheres to a style manual.

Each essay is expected to draw on 10-12 sources (that are actually referenced in the body of the essay). At least half of these items should be scholarly sources (journal articles, books, etc), the other items can be newspaper articles, opinion pieces, documentaries etc.

Your starting point for extra resources should be the *Assigned Readings*, the *Further Readings* (detailed in a separate document available on Moodle), and the bibliographies of both the *Assigned Readings* and the *Further Readings*.

Penalties

Penalties

All assigned work not submitted in by 5pm on the day it is due will be penalized one full letter grade (10%) for each day it is late. Any work submitted more than four days late will receive a zero. No extensions will be granted for assignments except in situations of documented medical emergencies.

4. Class Topics, Assigned Readings and Suggested Media

Please note that there is no assigned textbook for this class. All *Assigned Readings* are provided as PDFs on Moodle.

Readings have been clustered around modules: there are 12 modules for the course.

Module 1: Introduction to Social Media

Overview

In this module I provide an overview of the subject, including detailed information about assessment. Also introduced in this module is an introduction to social media prevalence as well as some of the key ideas around social media as the fourth (or fifth estate), the concepts of techno and cyberphobia, an examination of how social media has changed the mediascape, and an exploration of the idea of the attention economy.

(No assigned readings)

Module 2: Social Media and Social Activism

Overview

This module focuses on the role of social media in social activism. We look at this history of the Internet in the activist space, and then specifically, social media. We examine the role of social media in activism, explore how it works (including as a tool of agenda setting), explore case studies including the Flint Water Crisis, #SayHerName and #MeToo, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of social media in this space.

Assigned Readings

Rosewarne, Lauren (2019). “#MeToo and the Reasons to Be Cautious”. In *#MeToo and the Politics of Social Change*, eds. Bianca Fileborn and Rachel Loney-Howes. New York: Palgrave, Macmillan: forthcoming.

Moors, M. Rae. (2019). “What is Flint? Place, storytelling, and social media narrative reclamation during the Flint water crisis”. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22, 6: 808-822.

Gustafsson, Nils and Noomi Weinryb. (2019). "The populist allure of social media activism: Individualized charismatic authority". *Organization*, February: 1-10.

Briones, Rowena, Stephanie Madden and Melissa Janoske. (2013). "Kony 2012: Invisible Children and the Challenges of Social Media Campaigning and Digital Activism". *Journal of Current Issues in Media and Telecommunications*, 5, 3: 205-234.

Gladwell, Malcolm. (2010). "Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted". *The New Yorker*, September 27. Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/small-change-malcolm-gladwell>.

Key Questions

- Is social media key in social activism?
- Has activism become too reliant on social media?
- Is social media a political echo chamber?
- Is clicktivism negative?
- Can social media hold corporations accountable?
- Can #MeToo* be considered a success? (* As an essay question you can substitute #MeToo for #BlackLivesMatter, #SayHerName or any other hashtag campaign of your choosing)

Module 3: Social Media and Political Campaigning

Overview

In this module we examine the role of social media in political campaigning including as a tool of branding, fundraising and mobilization. The good and bad of such campaigning is examined and the impact is evaluated.

Assigned Readings

Carlson, Tom, Göran Djupsund and Kim Strandberg. (2013). "Taking Risks in Social Media Campaigning: The Early Adoption of Blogging by Candidates". *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 37, 1: 21-40.

Dimitrova, Daniela V. and Matthews, Jörg. (2018). "Social Media in Political Campaigning Around the World: Theoretically Methodological Challenges". *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 95, 2: 333-342.

Auter, Zachary J. and Fine, Jeffrey A. (2016). "Negative Campaigning in the Social Media Age: Attack Advertising on Facebook". *Political Behavior*, 38: 999-1020.

Kousser, Thad. (2019), "Tweet style: campaigning, governing, and social media in Australia". *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 54, 2: 183-201.

Stier, Sebastian, Arnim Bleier, Haiko Lietz & Markus Strohmaier. (2018). "Election Campaigning on Social Media: Politicians, Audiences, and the Mediation of Political Communication on Facebook and Twitter". *Political Communication*, 35, 1: 50-74.

Key Questions

- Has the impact of social media on campaigning been positive?
- Has social media benefited political candidates?

- Are some social media platforms more useful to candidates than others?
- Can a political candidate get elected without an online presence?

Module 4: Social Media and the Democratization of News

Overview

Not only has the internet changed the way news is distributed and consumed but it has led to conversations around the extent to which our world has been made more (or less) democratic. In this module we examine some of the changes that social media has made on news – including the rise of citizen journalism – and problematize such changes.

Assigned Readings

Gil de Zúñiga, Homero, Brigitte Huber and Nadine Strauß. (2018). “Social media and democracy”. *El profesional de la información*, 27, 6: 1172-1180.

Gil de Zúñiga, Homero and Trevor Diehl. (2019). “News finds me perception and democracy: Effects on political knowledge, political interest, and voting”. *News, Media & Society*, 21, 6: 1253–1271.

Cacciatore, Michael A., Sara K. Yeo, Dietram A. Scheufele, Michael A. Xenos, Dominique Brossard, and Elizabeth A. Corley. (2018). “Is Facebook Making Us Dumber? Exploring Social Media Use as a Predictor of Political Knowledge”. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 95, 2: 404-424.

Mallén, Agneta. (2016). “Stirring up virtual punishment: a case of citizen journalism, authenticity and shaming”. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, 17, 1: 3-18.

Schiffrin, Anya. (2017). “Disinformation and Democracy: The Internet Transformed Protest But Did Not Improve Democracy”. *Journal of International Affairs*, Fall/Winter, 119-125.

Key Questions

- Has social media been good for democracy?
- Is the internet killing democracy?
- Has social media positively impacted the media’s fourth estate function?
- Does social media provide an effective fifth estate function?
- Does social media make us better informed about politics?
- Can citizen journalists do things that mainstream journalists can’t?
- Has Facebook* made us dumber? (*As an essay question you can substitute Facebook for any other social media platform)
- Is the Donald Trump presidency a product of social media?

Module 5: Social Media and Community Building

Overview

In this module we focus on community – something assumed to be a social good and boasting high benefit to participants. Specifically we focus on the role of social media in creating and fostering communities, exploring how this is being accomplished and questioning the positives and negatives.

Assigned Readings

Jenkins, Elizabeth M. Zulfia Zaher, Stephanie A. Tikkanen and Jessica L. Ford. (2019). “Creative identity (Re)construction, Creative Community Building, and Creative Resistance: A Qualitative Analysis of Queer Ingroup Members’ Tweets after the Orlando Shooting”. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 101: 14-21.

Kožuh, Ines, Manfred Hintermair and Matjaz Debevc. (2016). “Community building among deaf and hard of hearing people by using written language on social networking sites”. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 65: 195-307.

Montgomery Beronda L. (2018). “Building and Sustaining Diverse Functioning Networks Using Social Media and Digital Platforms to Improve Diversity and Inclusivity”. *Frontiers in Digital Humanities*, 6, 22: 1-11.

Bahfen, Nasya. (2018). “The Individual and the Ummah: The Use of Social Media by Muslim Minority Communities in Australia and the United States”. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 38, 1: 119-131.

Key Questions

- Does social media harm communities?
- Does social media effectively facilitate community?
- Is social media an effective tool of community empowerment?
- Who does social media most benefit?
- Are there unique benefits for diasporas provided by social media?

Module 6: Social Media and Intimacy

Overview

The Internet has completely changed the way we meet intimate partners and sustain sexual relationships. In this module we examine the ways that the social media (including dating apps) has revolutionized intimacy including the rise of hookup culture. The costs and benefits of this intimacy revolution are also examined.

Assigned Readings

Rosewarne, Lauren. (2016). “The Market Economy of Love”. In *Intimacy on the Internet: Media Representations of Online Connections*. New York: Routledge, 5-40.

Rosewarne, Lauren. (2019). “Sexbots, Feminism and the New Frontier of Sexuality”. *Meanjin*, Winter: 100-108.

Liu, Xiaofei. (2015). “No Fats, Femmes, or Asians”. *Moral Philosophy and Politics*, 2, 2: 255–276.

Moran, James B., Kelsey J. Salerno and T. Joel Wade. (2018). “Snapchat as a new tool for sexual access: Are there sex differences?” *Personality and Individual Differences*, 129: 12-16.

Newett, Lyndsay, Brendan Churchill and Brady Robards. (2018). “Forming connections in the digital era: Tinder, a new tool in young Australian intimate life”. *Journal of Sociology*, 54, 3: 346-361.

Key Questions

- Has the internet made us shallower?
- Are dating apps harmful?

- Do men benefit disproportionately from dating apps?
- Has social media created a sexual revolution?
- Is it racist to have racial preference on dating apps?
- Is lookism discriminatory?

Module 7: Social Media and Identity Construction

Overview

In light of how much time we spend on social media, a key component of our use is the presentation of self. From marketing ourselves politically and sexually to the sharing of memes and photos and news items, this module examines the ways we construct identity online and problematizes the notion of authenticity.

Assigned Readings

Rhodes Lonergan, Alexandra, Kay Bussey, Jonathan Mond, Olivia Brown, Scott Griffiths, Stuart B. Murray and Deborah Mitchison. (2019). “Me, my selfie, and I: The relationship between editing and posting selfies and body dissatisfaction in men and women”. *Body Image*, 28: 39-43.

Thomas, Lisa, Pam Briggs, Andrew Hard and Finola Kerrigan. (2017). “Understanding social media and identity work in young people transitioning to university”. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 76: 541-553.

Richey, Michelle, Aparna Gonibeed and Ravishankar. (2018). “The Perils and Promises of Self-Disclosure on Social Media”. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 20, 3: 426-437.

Procházka, Ondrej. (2018). “A chronotopic approach to identity performance in a Facebook meme page”. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 25: 78–87.

Waycott, Jenny, Celia Thompson, Judith Sheard and Rosemary Clerehan. (2017). “A virtual panopticon in the community of practice: Students’ experiences of being visible on social media”. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 35: 12-20.

Gabriel, Fleur. (2014). “Sexting, Selfies and Self-Harm: Young People, Social Media and the Performance of Self-Development”. *Media International Australia*, 151, 1: 104-112.

Key Questions

- Is it possible to present an authentic self online?
- Is identity socially constructed?
- Does taking selfies make us narcissistic?
- Are certain platforms better at showcasing identity?
- Do social media influencers have influence?

Module 8: Social Media and Fake News

Overview

Few media issues have dominated attention in recent years more than “fake news”. In this module we look at definitions of the term – from it being a label describing news reports with deliberately deceptive content through to it being used as condemnation of unfavorable content – as well as issues including prevalence, consequences, and questions of who is responsible for prevention.

Assigned Readings

Allcott, Hunt and Matthew Gentzkow. (2017). "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election". *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31, 2: 211-236.

Bovet, Alexandre and Hernán A. Makse. (2019). "Influence of fake news in Twitter during the 2016 US presidential election". *Nature Communications*, 10, 1: 1-14.

Mason, Lance E, Daniel G. Krutka and Jeremy Stoddard. (2018). "Media Literacy, Democracy, and the Challenge of Fake News". *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 10, 2: 1-10.

Brodie, Ian. (2018). "Pretend news, False news, Fake news: *The Onion* as Put-on, Prank, and legend". *Journal of American Folklore*, 131, 522:451-459.

Brummette, John, Marcia DiStaso, Michail Vafeiadis, and Marcus Messner. (2018). "Read All About It: The Politicization of "Fake News" on Twitter". *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 95, 2: 497-517.

Key Questions

- Is fake news a problem?
- Should we care about fake news?
- Has 'fake news' been weaponized?
- Whose responsibility should fake news prevention be?
- Did fake news impact on the 2016 presidential election?

Module 9: Social Media and Hate Speech

Overview

In this module we explore the toxicity of the internet, examining the means by which hate is made visible, encouraged and exacerbated online. The unique properties of social media in this space are examined, and the role of platforms and government to prevent this is examined.

Assigned Readings

Alkiviadou, Natalie. (2019). "Hate speech on social media networks: towards a regulatory framework?" *Information & Communications Technology Law*, 28,1: 19-35.

Nakamura, Lisa. (2019). "Watching White Supremacy on Digital Video Platforms: "Screw Your Optics, I'm Going In". *Film Quarterly*, Spring: 19-22.

Mathew, Binny, Ritam Dutt, Pawan Goyal and Animesh Mukherjee. (2018). "Spread of hate speech in online social media". *International AAI Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM)*, December: 1-8.

Hine, Gabriel Emile, Jeremiah Onaolapo, Emiliano De Cristofaro, Nicolas Kourtellis, Ilias Leontiadis, Riginos Samaras, Gianluca Stringhini and Jeremy Blackburn. (2017). "Kek, Cucks, and God Emperor Trump: A Measurement Study of 4chan's Politically Incorrect Forum and Its Effects on the Web". *International AAI Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM)*, October: 1-15.

Ruwandika, and A.R. Weerasinghe. (2018). "Identification of Hate Speech in Social Media". *International Conference on Advances in ICT for Emerging Regions*, September: 273-278.

El Sherief, Mai, Vivek Kulkarni, Dana Nguyen, William Yang Wang and Elizabeth Belding. (2018). "Hate Lingo: A Target-based Linguistic Analysis of Hate Speech in Social Media". *International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM)*, June: 1-10.

Key Questions

- Has social media created more hate?
- Is social media a toxic space?
- Can social media platforms stop hate?
- Should hate online be stopped?

Module 10: Social Media and Terrorist Networks

Overview

In recent years, the electronic footprint of individual terrorists as well as terrorist organizations' use of social media has been put under greater scrutiny. In this module we examine the role of social media in radicalization and recruitment and question the individual culpability of social media platforms.

Assigned Readings

Softness, Nicole. (2016). "Terrorist Communications: Are Facebook, Twitter, and Google Responsible for the Islamic State's Actions?" *Journal of International Affairs*, Winter, 70, 1: 201-215.

Weimann, Gabriel. (2015). "Terrorist Migration to Social Media". *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 16, 1: 180-187.

Fahmy, Shahira S. (2017). "Media, Terrorism, and Society: Perspectives and Trends in the Digital Age". *Mass Communication and Society*, 20: 735-739.

Awan, Imran. (2017). "Cyber-Extremism: Isis and the Power of Social Media". *Social Science and Public Policy*, 54: 138-149.

Bertram, Luke. (2016). "Terrorism, the Internet and the Social Media Advantage: Exploring how terrorist organizations exploit aspects of the internet, social media and how these same platforms could be used to counter-violent extremism". *Journal for Deradicalization*, Summer, 7: 225-252.

Key Questions

- Does social media exacerbate the terrorist problem?
- Is social media key in radicalization?
- Does the internet cause terrorism?
- Should racial content be censored online?

Module 11: Social Media and Gendered Harassment

Overview

The internet is a uniquely hostile place for minorities and marginalized groups. In this module we look at women as a marginalized group who are disproportionately the victims of online hate and harassment. We examine incels, as well as the whys of online misogyny and explore some of the methods used to remedy this situation.

Assigned Readings

Thompson, Laura. (2018). “‘I can be your Tinder nightmare’: Harassment and misogyny in the online sexual marketplace”. *Feminism & Psychology*, 28, 1: 69-89.

Koulouris, Theodore. (2018). “Online misogyny and the alternative right: debating the undebatable”. *Feminist Media Studies*, 18, 4: 750-761.

Drakett, Jessica, Bridgette Rickett, Katy Day and Kate Milnes. (2018). “Old jokes, new media – Online sexism and constructions of gender in Internet memes”. *Feminism & Psychology*, 28, 1: 109-127.

Cole, Kristi K. (2015). “‘It’s Like She’s Eager to be Verbally Abuse’”: Twitter, Trolls, and (En)Gendering Disciplinary Rhetoric”. *Feminist Media Studies*, 15, 2: 356-358.

Ganzer, Miranda. (2014). “In Bed With the Trolls”. *Feminism & Psychology*, 14, 6: 1098-1100.

Key Questions

- Is online misogyny different to other kinds of hate online?
- Is the internet a different place for women than men?
- Are incels are product of the internet?

Module 12: Social Media and Public Shaming

Overview

While public shaming has occurred throughout history, social media has created the opportunity for anybody with access to the internet to shame others. In this module we look at who is shaming and who is getting shamed online. Also examined is the very fine line between shaming and calling out and calling out as a tool of social activism.

Assigned Readings

Cagle, Lauren E. (2019). “Surveilling Strangers: The Disciplinary Biopower of Digital Genre Assemblages”. *Computers and Composition*, 52: 67-78.

Dunsby, Ruth M. and Loene M. Howes. (2019). “The NEW adventures of the digital vigilante! Facebook users’ views on online naming and shaming”. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 52, 1: 41-59.

Hess, Kristy and Lisa Waller. (2014). “The digital pillory: media shaming of ‘ordinary’ people for minor crimes”. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 28, 1: 101-111.

Kasra, Mona. (2017). “Vigilantism, public shaming, and social media hegemony: The role of digital-networked images in humiliation and sociopolitical control”. *The Communication Review*, 20, 3: 172-188.

Lauricella, Sharon. (2019). “Darkness as the frenemy: social media, student shaming, and building academic culture”. *Communication Education*, 68, 3: 386-393.

Jane, Emma A. (2017). “Feminist Digilante Responses to a Slut-Shaming on Facebook”. *Social Media & Society*, April-June: 1-10.

Key Questions

- Is calling someone out online the same as shaming?
- Is there a difference between harassment and shaming?
- Is shaming an effective tool of activism?
- Is shaming an effective tool of punishment?
- Are certain people more prone to social media shaming than others?

5. Attendance

Being an online course, there is no physical attendance requirement. Students are however, expected to access each of the only modules and participate in online activities as requested.

6. Time Commitment

This class will entail approximately 30-hours worth of material (inclusive of online activities). In addition to this, you will be expected to allocate time for reading assigned texts and writing your essay.

7. Discrimination and Harassment

Wesleyan University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. Wesleyan will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this Wesleyan policy, “Protected Classes” refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the [Office for Equity and Inclusion](#) at 860-685-4771. The [responsibility of the University Members](#) has more information.

8. Honor Code

In accordance with the Honor Code, submitting another person’s work as your own constitutes plagiarism and will not be tolerated. If you have any questions about proper attributions, see pages 4-7 of <http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/StudentHandbook.pdf>

9. Students with Disabilities

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a disability as defined by the ADA. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible. If you have a disability, or think that you might have a disability, please contact Accessibility Services in order to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Accessibility Services is located in North College, Rooms 021/022, or can be reached by email (accessibility@wesleyan.edu) or phone (860-685-5581).

10. Extra Resources

Please note that I am unable to read drafts (you can however, send through a plan at any time during the course for feedback). Should you encounter academic difficulties in the course please consult me directly. You may also wish to consult the [Peer Advising Program](#) or the [Peer Tutoring Program](#) for additional support. Students with documented physical or cognitive differences that require

accommodations should collaborate with Disability Resources to develop pathways to academic accessibility.

11. Title IX

Wesleyan University prohibits all forms of discriminatory harassment and sexual misconduct. Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that each member of the university community has the opportunity to participate fully in the process of education and development. Wesleyan strives to maintain a safe and welcoming environment free from acts of discriminatory harassment and sexual misconduct. However, when incidents occur, it is the University is committed to respond in a manner that provides safety, privacy and support to those affected.