

Democracy, Governance, and the Digital Network.

EMAC 6361

David Parry

Spring 2011

TH 7:00-9:45 CB 3.1306

dparry@utdallas.edu

www.outsidethetext.com/trace

Office Number: 1.502

Office Hours: M 5:00-6:00, TH 5:00-6:00

& by appointment

Course Description:

Early criticism of democracy in the age of networked communication was often characterized by a rather significant divide, between those who believed that the network would prove to be the means by which universal democracy would be achieved, and those that argued the network would bring about the collapse of democratic institutions. As with other hyperbolic prophecies throughout history the reality proved to be far more nuanced and complicated. This class will strive to analyze these more complex and nuanced transformations. We will look at the ways that dissidents and civil organizations are using the network to foster democracy as well as consider the ways in which governments are using the network to resist social transformation. Equally as important we will ask more foundational questions seeking to understand how the existence of the digital network transforms not only what it means to govern but what it means to be a citizen within a political space.

Required Texts:

(all texts are available at Off-Campus Books)

- Blown To Bits: Your Life, Liberty and Happiness After the Digital Explosion* by Abelson, Ledeen, and Lewis ISBN 0137135599
- The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* by Jurgen Habermas ISBN 0262581086
- Digital Media and Democracy* by Megan Bowler ISBN 0262514893
- Premediation* by Richard Grusin ISBN 0230242529
- Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape our Lives* by Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler ISBN 0316036137
- Networks and States* by Milton Mueller ISBN 0262014599
- The Exploit: A Theory of Networks* by Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker ISBN 0816650446
- The Net Delusion* by Evgeny Morozov ISBN 1586488740
- Republic 2.0* by Cass Sunstein ISBN 0691143285
- Code 2.0* by Lawrence Lessig ISBN 0465039146
- Access Controlled: The Shaping of Power, Rights, and Rule in Cyberspace* by Delbert, Palfrey, Rohozinski, Zittrain, Haraszti ISBN 0262514354

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation (25%): The primary requirement for this course is class participation. To do well in this course you will need to come to class having done the reading

for the week prepared to discuss the text at hand. I realize that the reading load for this class is heavy at times, however, we are going to be covering some complex and complicated issues and in order for the class discussion to proceed and for everyone to benefit the most from our time in class it is necessary for every student to have a shared basis from which class discussions can proceed.

Thus for every class it is your responsibility to come to class not only having done the reading, but to have spent time considering the issues that each text raises, ready to engage in a lively discussion about the questions at hand. Missing more than one class will lead to a lower grade. Missing more than two can result in failing the course.

Individual Research Blogs (35%): Each student will have a blog, whose thematic focus will center around one of the topics we are covering in class. Each week you will be responsible for posting about the weeks reading and relating it to your specific area within the broader class. Initially your research blog will necessarily be general, but as we progress through the semester you will want to refine your focus ideally leading to your final paper.

Final Paper/Project (45%): Each student will be responsible for a final project. This project can take a variety of “textual” forms. Each project should constitute a significant investigation into one specific topic covered in class.

Wikileaks:

It became clear to me as I finalized this syllabus that Wikileaks is becoming, has become, the paradigmatic (or at least one of the paradigmatic examples) of democracy in a networked age. As such we will be discussing Wikileaks a great deal in class, especially over the second half of the class. It is your responsibility to understand the case, and understand the debate surrounding Wikileaks. I realize that some of you have government jobs and therefore have been told not to download the documents onto your computer (personal or work). Do not worry, you will not be required to access the documents or download them for reading, instead focus on understanding what people are saying about Wikileaks and keeping informed about the ongoing debate.

Course Website:

The course website for this class can be found at <<http://www.outsidethetext.com/trace>>. You should get in the habit of checking this regularly as I will post suggestions and thoughts about the readings here, as well as links to other things that might interest the class. The syllabus can be found here as well, and any changes to the syllabus will be posted here. If you forget the web address you can always find it from <<http://www.outsidethetext.com>>, an easier url to remember.

How to Reach Me:

The best way to reach me is by email <dparry@utdallas.edu> or you can find me online at <<http://www.outsidethetext.com>>. I check email frequently throughout the day. If you email me and do not receive a response within 48 hours (usually I will get back to you within a day), please feel free to email me again (I might not have received your first one) and give me a reminder. I promise not to consider this harassing.

My office hours are Monday and Thursday 5:00-6:00 (or by appointment—I am frequently on campus outside these hours). My office is ATEC 1.502.

Project Guidelines

One of the goals of this class is to have students participate in, practice, sustained intellectual analysis about a specific subject, and to do so in a manner that leverages networked discursive spaces. Or, to put the manner in a different way, to engage in “writing” for the web, on the web (in both senses of the word “on”). As such, one of the central requirements of this course is to manage what I will call a “research blog” throughout the course of the semester. This blog is meant to not only document your engagement with the topics at hand but ideally add to the wider conversation occurring on the network about these issues.

Research Blogs:

Over the course of the semester each student will be required to maintain a blog which documents their engagement and investigation into the topics covered in this course. Initially these weekly writings will necessarily be broad as we lay out the theory which will inform our study. But as the semester progresses the goal should be to refine your writing and increasingly focus on one specific aspect of the more general topic. For example you might want to focus on an issue (Net Neutrality, activism), internet governance in a specific country (other than the U.S.), a specific piece of technology (mobile phones, ubiquitous cameras), a particular service (Facebook, YouTube). The only topic that is off limits is Wikileaks, as we will be using this as the uber example throughout the class.

Weekly Assignment:

Each week you are responsible for writing at least two blog posts. The first should directly engage with that week's readings. The goal of this post should be to first summarize (briefly) what you see to be as one major point (not the entire reading) and contextualize said point in terms of your area of focus. For example if we are reading Mueller's *Networks and States* he makes many important points about governing the internet, but you could talk narrowly about jurisdiction for crimes in particular about how that relates to prosecution of Wikileaks (if your focus was Wikileaks, which it can't be, but you get the idea). The second post should be about your general topic matter. Find another post on the web, a news article, and editorial, whatever, and expand upon its relevance. These posts are due by Tuesday at noon.

Final Projects:

You have several options for your final project:

- Eight to ten page paper which engages one of the issues which developed from class.
- A web based project which helps us to understand one of the issues we raised in class (as an example of this see the CamerasEverywhere site below).
- Create a short documentary on one of these issues. Think of this as a visual “essay.”
- Propose something else.

Any project which is not a scholarly paper must also be accompanied by a five page essay explaining and contextualizing the project in terms of the class readings. Think of this as writing a critical essay about whatever project you produce.

As part of the final project you will be required to give a short (5 minute presentation) on the last day of class covering your project. (I will give more information about this as we approach the end of the semester.)

Timeline for Projects:

- January 20th: Set up your individual blog.
- February 10th: Determine your blog's focus and redesign accordingly.
- April 7th: Proposal for final project.
- May 5th: Presentation on final projects.
- May 9th: Final projects due.

Examples:

Below are two good examples of what I have in mind. These were both done by undergraduates last semester.

BigBrotherisWatching.us: This site focused on privacy issues, particularly how to reclaim privacy. Notice how this is more than just a series of posts, but also contains links to other places that might interest a reader.

CamerasEverywhere.us: This site is a good example of laying out a blog to feature a final project. Like the above site it contains more than just their writings. But also uses images, embeds videos, etc. to help engage the reader.

Schedule of Readings

Week One: Introduction (January 13th)

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

John Perry Barlow, "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace."

Selections from *Democracy and New Media*

Week Two: Where We Stand (January 20th)

Blown To Bits: Your Life, Liberty and Happiness After the Digital Explosion. Abelson, Ledeen, and Lewis

Week Three: The Public Sphere (January 27th)

The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society. Jurgen Habermas

Week Four: Governmentality (February 3rd)

Michael Foucault (Selected Readings)

Week Five: Limits of Habermas (February 10th)

"Cyberdemocracy." Mark Poster

Digitize This Book Gary Hall (selections)

The Dubious Link Ariel Armory (selections)

Week Six: Changing Role of Media (February 17th)

Digital Media and Democracy. Megan Bowler

Week Seven: Media of the Future (February 24th)

Premediation by Richard Grusin

Week Eight: Network Logic (March 3rd)

Manuel Castells, "Why Networks Matter."

Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape our Lives

Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler

"Human Mobility," and "Predictably Unpredictable." Albert-László Barabási

Week Nine: (March 10th)

No Class

Spring Break

Week Ten: Resisting the Networks (March 24th)

The Exploit: A Theory of Networks. Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker

Week Eleven: States vs. Networks (March 31st)

Networks and States. Milton Mueller

Week Twelve: Good or Bad? (April 7th)

The Net Delusion. Evgeny Morozov

"How cellphones, Twitter, Facebook can make history." Clay Shirky

"Digital Power and Its Discontents." *Edge Conversation.*

Week Thirteen: Dissolving the Public Sphere (April 14th)

Republic 2.0 Cass Sunstein

Week Fourteen: Controlling the Net (April 21st)

Schedule of Readings

Code 2.0. Lawrence Lessig

Week Fifteen: Global Policy (April 28th)

Access Controlled: The Shaping of Power, Rights, and Rule in Cyberspace by Delbert, Palfrey, Rohozinski, Zittrain, Haraszti

Finals Week

Class Presentations