COMM 4853.01 – New Media and Democracy  
Spring 2013, TWRF 12:40-1:35, Denney 0253

Professor  
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Office: 3026 Derby Hall  
Office Hours: TBA during exam weeks or by appointment

Course Overview  
This class explores relationships between new media and the health of our democracy. There are many forms of online political communication, each with a variety of possible effects on the quality, equality, open-endedness, and efficiency of the democratic decision-making process as a whole.

This class aims 1.) to give you a more nuanced and critical view of the potential effects of new media, 2.) to raise your standards about what counts as a healthy democracy, and 3.) to make you a more informed consumer (or producer!) of online political communication.

Grading  
25%  In-class activities  
20%  Midterm 1  
25%  Midterm 2  
30%  Final

In-class activities  
Most class periods will include some kind of in-class activity. One purpose of these activities is to check attendance. Activities can’t be made up if you were not present. Activities are not graded for correctness; instead, you will receive full credit for each one you turn in as long as you put in a reasonable effort, and half credit if you do not put in a reasonable effort.

Sick days policy  
Your lowest 5 activity grades will be dropped. Think of these as your sick days. In other words, don’t waste them early on, or you won’t have them in case you need them later. Because these drops are automatic, you don’t need to tell me when you have a good reason to miss class. The only way you can get more drops is if you have documented reasons to miss 6 or more classes.

If you have any unused “sick days” left over at the end of the semester, each one will count as ½ percent of extra credit.

Homework  
There will be a few small homework assignments. They may be announced in the class session before they are due, so if you miss class, make sure to check the class schedule on Carmen to see if anything is due for the following class session. Although other forms of
homework are possible, my main intent here is to assign reading questions for particularly important readings, to make sure everyone gets certain points from those readings before class discussion about them.

Exams
There will be three exams, two midterms and a final. They will consist of about 60% multiple choice and 40% short answer questions.

Extra credit for concept example videos
Email me a funny video to use as an example of a concept covered in class, and if I use it in class I will give you ½ to 1 point of extra credit, up to a maximum of 5 points of total extra credit in the class. To have a good chance of your video being used, you need to look ahead at the upcoming topics in the syllabus and email me at least a day in advance of the topic your video clip is relevant to.

Course Policies
1. Academic misconduct, including but not limited to plagiarism, will be penalized through the procedures set up by the university.
2. Students with disabilities are responsible for making their needs known to me and seeking assistance in a timely manner. If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please also contact the Office for Disability Services at (614) 292-3307 in Room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Tentative Class Schedule
All readings will be posted on Carmen, and should be completed prior to the corresponding class session. Refer to the latest copy of the syllabus on Carmen instead of a saved or printed copy, or you may miss changes.

Feb 27 (Wed): Introduction.
No readings.

Feb 28 (Thurs): Three views of democracy
Dahlberg, L. (2001). The Internet and democratic discourse: Exploring the prospects of online deliberative forums extending the public sphere.

Feb 29 (Fri): Social capital

Mar 5 (Tues): Social media and social capital

Mar 6 (Wed): Media and trust in strangers

Mar 7 (Thurs): **Movie**

Mar 8 (Fri): **Movie continued**

**SPRING BREAK**

Mar 19 (Tues): **New media and political knowledge**
Readings TBA

Mar 20 (Wed): **New media and selective exposure**

Mar 21 (Thurs): **Exam review**

Mar 22 (Fri): **Exam 1**

Mar 26 (Tues): **Deliberation**

Mar 27 (Wed): **Online deliberation**
Coleman, S. & Gotze, J. Bowling together: Online public engagement in policy deliberation
Intro through chapter 3 required, chapters 4 and 5 optional

Mar 28 (Thurs): **Expression and citizenship**

Mar 29 (Fri): **Expression effects**

Apr 2 (Tues): **New forms of everyday political participation**

Apr 3 (Wed): **Political power of social media**

Apr 4 (Thurs): **Exam review**

Apr 5 (Fri): **Exam 2**

Apr 9 (Tues): **Citizen journalism**
Apr 10 (Wed): Wikinews

Apr 11 (Thurs): OhMyNews

Apr 12 (Fri): Online campaigning innovations

Apr 16 (Tues): Topic TBA

Apr 17 (Wed): Topic TBA

Apr 18 (Thurs): Topic TBA

Apr 19 (Fri): Exam review

Apr 30 (Tues): Final exam 2:00pm-3:45pm