



TREND Webinar series

(De)Mobilizing with digital media

February 25-26 & March
11, 2021

Coordinated by Ann Crigler (USC)
& Violaine Roussel (Paris 8)

Presentation

This webinar explores political mobilization in the digital age, at the intersection of news and entertainment media:

- > Storytelling and politics: We explore how different categories of social actors (political representatives/candidates and their staffs, political activists or advocacy groups, but also journalists and digital media specialists, as well as entertainment professionals) tell political stories with social and digital media, and how the boundary between politics and entertainment gets blurred and moved in the process.
- > The socioeconomic processes behind the production of such stories is also be a focus of our webinar. We will look at the changing relationships between the media or entertainment field, on one hand, and the political sphere, on the other hand, in the digital age. Our discussions will shed light on the newcomers who have become major players in creating online content (from digitally savvy young activists to traditional Hollywood professionals increasingly involved in the shaping of political campaigns and the writing of political narratives, among others), and the ways in which political organizations deal with them, competing or collaborating with them. Our discussions will also address how the political economy of the Internet and the increasing dominance of a few platforms impact the democratic potential/power of citizens and creators in political storytelling.

Session 1 – February 25 | 9-10:30am in Los Angeles / 6-7:30pm in Paris

Jacob Matthews and Athina Karatzogianni “The Black Box of Movement Leadership: From the 1960s to the Current Context”

This research produces a multimodal netnographic (interviews, observation and data) analysis of contemporary leadership emergence in social movements with activists from Black Lives Matter (BLM) and environmental activists from Extinction Rebellion (XR) and the YouthStrike4Climate (SS4C) movements. Additionally, it discusses continuities and discontinuities in comparison to historical media strategies of leaders in social movements from the 1960s onwards.

Jacob Matthews is a professor in information and communication sciences at Université Paris 8. His research has primarily focused on the political economy of the Internet and digital intermediation platforms.

Athina Karatzogianni is a professor in media and communication at the University of Leicester. She researches the use of digital technologies by emerging sociopolitical and economic formations.

Mike Ananny “Public Interest and Media Infrastructures: Regulating the Technology Companies that Make ‘Pictures in Our Heads’”

Grounded in Walter Lippmann’s question about how media create “pictures in our heads,” and Raymond Williams’s claim that “there are in fact no masses, but only ways of seeing people as masses,” this presentation interrogates the media infrastructures, data sets, and algorithms that social media platforms use to structure online life. I explain this “infrastructural approach” to platform studies through three case studies that show how sociotechnical categories, probabilities, and exceptions create platform politics, and suggest how interventions might help to create new forms of public life.

Mike Ananny is an Associate Professor of Communication and Journalism, Society of Humanities Fellow, and Affiliated Faculty of Science, Technology, and Society at the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. He studies the public significance of news infrastructures and the politics of algorithmic systems. He is the author of numerous articles and the book Networked Press Freedom (MIT Press, 2018), co-editor (with Laura Forlano and Molly Wright Steenson) of the volume Bauhaus Futures (MIT Press, 2019), and is preparing a manuscript on the public power of silence (under contract with Yale University Press). He holds a PhD from Stanford University, a Masters from the MIT Media Laboratory, and has written for popular press publications including The Atlantic, Wired Magazine, and the Columbia Journalism Review.

Session 2 – February 26 | 9-10:30am in Los Angeles / 6-7:30pm in Paris

Alison Dundes Renteln “Misappropriation of Symbols Online: A Case Study of Rescuing Pepe the Frog”

Symbols inevitably play an important role in politics, both domestic and international. When they are circulated in “viral” fashion through cyberspace to promote a cause, they may be even more provocative. How should images that are traumatic be regulated in the twenty-first century? In this paper I examine the “Pepe the Frog” meme to scrutinize how the alt-right co-opted an image from a children’s storybook and the subsequent litigation challenging this usage. By analyzing this case study, I consider how international law governing hate speech law applies to the dissemination of memes that convey messages of hate. The question is whether the law is ultimately capable of regulating cultural appropriation of this sort.

Alison Dundes Renteln is Professor of Political Science at USC, with joint appointments in Anthropology, Law, and Public Policy. Her publications include *The Cultural Defense* (Oxford, 2004), *Folk Law* (University of Wisconsin, 1995), *Multicultural Jurisprudence* (Hart, 2009), *Cultural Law* (Cambridge, 2010), *Global Bioethics and Human Rights* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), *Images and Human Rights* (Cambridge Scholars 2018), *Personal Autonomy in Plural Societies: A Principle and Its Paradoxes* (Routledge, 2018).

Rémi Rouge “Social Media and Memory Services: A Digital Politics of Memory”

While digital media are often presented as focused on the present time and the future, since 2011, several applications and functionalities suggesting “digital memories” by resurfacing old content have been created. The economic competition for data appropriation is here inseparable from the competition for the definition of what makes a “good memory.” By analyzing the activities of engineers and designers who produce these apps and functionalities, I show how they contribute to shaping a new politics of memory.

Rémi Rouge is a doctoral student in Political Science at Université Paris 8 and a member of CRESPPA-Labtop. He has recently published "Des souvenirs très précieux : souvenirs numériques et valorisation des données" (in Éric George (ed.), *Numérisation de la société et enjeux sociopolitiques 1*, Londres, ISTE Editions, 2019).

Session 3 – March 11 | 9-10:30am in Los Angeles / 6-7:30pm in Paris

Keivan Djavadzadeh “‘This a New Vanguard’. Female rappers, Feminism and the Black Lives Matter Movement”

Rap music is commonly presented in the media as inherently political. Many artists or groups come to mind to illustrate that rap is the protest genre of our time, reflecting the political climate and fighting the power. Very few female rappers however are said to be "conscious rappers". Because their songs often address issues related to gender and sexuality rather than direct institutional oppression, some argue that they are not political at all. Yet, the personal is political. Furthermore, female rappers have been increasingly vocal on social media about the need for artists to take a stronger stance on Black Lives Matter, political campaigns and feminism. This presentation interrogates how social media has changed “raptivism,” allowing female rappers to share more explicitly their political views.

Keivan Djavadzadeh is Assistant Professor of Communication and Media Studies at Université Paris 8. Prior to that, he has been a visiting research fellow at Brown University in the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America. His research focuses on discourses and representations about race, gender and sexuality in the music industry, with an emphasis on hip-hop. More recently, he has expanded his analysis to include celebrity practice and professionalization of female rappers in the digital age.

Kasia Anderson “Read the Room: Crises and Creations of Fame Under Lockdown”

By the summer of 2020, it was clear that the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with groundswells of social unrest in the U.S., had abruptly raised the stakes and altered the rules of public political engagement. Some prominent figures from the realm of fame switched up their acts accordingly, at times inventively, while others who flouted the new guidelines were swiftly and decisively censured by and through the same online audiences on whom they relied to stay relevant as they stayed home. Yet to claim, as some critics did, that the moment posed an existential threat to celebrity itself appears to have been an overstatement.

Dr. Kasia Anderson is a communication scholar and an award-winning journalist with two decades of experience at online and print publications. She has reported for the New York Daily News, The Wrap, Reuters, The Orlando Sentinel, Salon and Truthdig, where she served as a top editor for more than a decade. She is currently a managing editor of the International Journal of Communication. In May 2018, she completed her doctorate at USC Annenberg with a dissertation about an emerging mode of communication co-produced by the rise of reality and social media, by developments in news and entertainment media, and by the ongoing merger between the domains of celebrity and politics.

Online (Zoom)

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