Module Description

The increased access to digital technology in the Global South has been celebrated by social scientists, policy makers, and human rights groups as an empowering new way for ordinary citizens to collectively mobilize against repressive rulers. Indeed, amid the civilian uprisings that spread across the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, digital platforms were declared the principal tool of the protest movement. However, increasing evidence shows that behind the scenes, governments across the world have continuously developed tools to surveil, manipulate, and censor the digital flow of information. In turn, while dissidents and opposition groups are empowered through the use of the internet, this technology also offers itself to previously unseen levels of surveillance and manipulation.

This course will focus on the opportunities and challenges offered by the widespread adoption of the internet, inviting students to move beyond the traditional Westernised approaches to explore cases in the Global South. In particular, the course will cover topics such as hashtag activism in Latin America, the Arab Spring, protests in Asia, challenges to journalism and reporting, disinformation and minority groups, social media and conflict in the Middle East, and governmental surveillance.

Some sections of this document build on James P Cross and Stefan Müller’s syllabi and their excellent advice. I copied many sentences verbatim. I thank James and Stefan for allowing me to reuse and adjust their advice.
Course Programme

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Learning Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding
Following this course students will develop a range of important transferable skills.

Substantive Knowledge
By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Gain knowledge of the opportunities and limitations of the internet in the context of the Global South.
- Outline the characteristics that make the Global South a particular case.
- Understand various ways of empirically examining related questions and policy solutions.
- Apply relevant theories to political events and practical dilemmas.
- Identify real-life examples and applications.

Skills (Intellectual and Transferable)

The course will encourage you to:

- Listen carefully and critically to orally-presented arguments.
- Ability to understand the scientific literature, and in particular to identify research puzzles and knowledge gaps.
- Make links between material presented at different times, on different issues.
• Construct persuasive written, and oral arguments supported by evidence, orally and in writing.

• Read critically and with a clearly defined purpose.

• Apply your theoretical knowledge to the real world.

• Prepare, articulate and defend answers to set questions.

• Formulate and ask your own questions about course material.

The written work in the course will require you to:

• Select relevant material from lectures, literature, news sources, and the web.

• Understand, analyse and assess that material.

• Produce a sustained, structured and informed answer.

• Write in a concise and cogent style.

Assessment

Grade Component Breakdown

• Continuous assessment - 30%
  – Encounter - 15%
  – Debate - 15%
  – Meme Challenge - additional marks

• Final essay - 70%
  – 2x essay questions answered @ 35% each

Encounter - 15%

Over the course of the term, students will need to individually prepare and present one "encounter". In their 5 minute presentation, students will need to describe what they have "encountered" – a song, film, tweet, news story, book, etc. – provide a link (if applicable) and connect it to the material discussed in class. Your presentations should demonstrate your ability to:

• Identify important, relevant and recent developments.

• Understand and apply the main theoretical approaches covered in the course to analyse real world issues.

• Clearly describe what was "encountered" – a song, film, tweet, video game, book, conversation with a parent, etc. and connect it to the theoretical discussions developed in class (ESSENTIAL TO PASS!).

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• Be able to explain in few words the relevance of the "encounter" to the topics being discussed in the course.

Students will be asked to sign up to a specific topic they would like to cover in their encounter at least 5 days before the seminar takes place. Encounters should be submitted on OLAT BEFORE the Monday seminar including 2/3 slides and a short (300w) summary.

Each student will be required to present at least once in the term. No more than 2/3 students are allowed to present each week, and topics will be assigned on a first come first served basis.

**Debate - 15%**

The seminars will focus on in-class discussions. For that purpose, on 8 May we will hold an in-class debate. Details of how the debate will be structured will be provided in class. However, students will need to prepare in advance 3 arguments in favour and 3 arguments against the following question:

- why could the advent of the Internet in the Global South be considered both the cause of ‘the golden age of global democratization’ AND its demise.

Their arguments should relate to the assigned readings and the topics discussed in class. Moreover, every student will have to submit a copy of their arguments on OLAT BY 7 MAY.

**Meme Challenge**

Students who would like to receive additional marks are invited to take part of the meme challenge. Students will have to create an original meme that creatively describes, criticizes, or analyses the module’s material. The meme should be accompanied by a short (150/200 words) description of the meme’s relevance and connection to the module. The meme will be shared with the class and might be posted on Twitter (with the author’s permission).

Students should communicate their desire to participate in the challenge in advance of the submission. Memes will only be accepted between 27 February and 15 May.

**End of Term Essay - 70%**

This examination will constitute 70% of your final mark and will take the form of an essay. Students will be allowed 20 days after receiving the essay instructions to submit their answers using OLAT.

There will be 6 essay questions and you have to answer 2 of them.

**Deadline: 1 June**

Essay questions and instructions will be released on 15 May.

**Plagiarism**

Although this should be obvious, plagiarism – copying someone else’s text without acknowledgement or beyond ‘fair use’ quantities – is not allowed. Plagiarism is an issue we
take very serious here in UZH. Please familiarize yourself with the definition of plagiarism on UZH’s website and make sure not to engage in it.

**Late Submission Policy**

All written work must be submitted on or before the due dates. When an extension is necessary, the student will need to contact our Prüfungsdelegierte Naome Czisch (pruefungen@ipz.uzh.ch) BEFORE THE DEADLINE to apply for extenuating circumstances.

**Grades**

I am very happy to schedule 1:1 meetings to provide students with further feedback when required. However, students should be advised that grades will not be modified after they are released.

**Participation in class**

This course is designed as a seminar. While a short lecture by the instructor will precede the discussion, students are expected to actively participate in class. For that purpose, students will need to follow the assigned readings and come to class ready to engage in dynamic discussions. Moreover, I will sometimes encourage debates by proposing different views and challenging students’ arguments. This is not a means of discouraging opposing views or imposing my own perspective on the students. On the contrary, it is a resource I employ in class to invite students to develop critical thinking and learn to construct arguments to support their own perspectives.

**Essay Grading Rubric**

The following guidelines should be adhered to when writing your final essay:

- **Statement of Purpose/ Focus and Organisation - 40%**
  - The response is fully sustained and consistently and purposefully focused:
    - Claims are clearly stated, focused, and strongly maintained
    - Claims are introduced and communicated appropriately for the purpose, audience, and task
    - Alternate or opposing claims are clearly addressed
  - The response has a clear and effective organisational structure creating unity and completeness:
    - A variety of transitional strategies is consistently used to effectively clarify the relationships between and among ideas
    - The progression of ideas from beginning to end is logical
    - The introduction and conclusion are effective for audience and purpose
    - Appropriate sentence structure variety produce strong connection between ideas
Evidence/Elaboration - 40%

- The response provides thorough and convincing support/evidence for the writer’s claim that includes the effective use of sources, facts, and details. The response achieves substantial depth that is specific and relevant:
  * Claims are supported with relevant evidence from credible sources and clear reasoning
  * Use of evidence from sources is smoothly integrated, cited, comprehensive, and concrete
  * A variety of effective argumentative techniques is used
- The response demonstrates strategic use of language to produce clear communication:
  * Precise language clearly and effectively expresses ideas
  * The use of academic and domain-specific vocabulary is clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose

Editing Conventions - 20%

- The response displays adequate command of all grade level and preceding level conventions of writing:
  * Some errors in usage and sentence formation may be present, but no systematic pattern of errors is displayed
  * The use of punctuation, capitalisation, and spelling is adequate

OLAT

Please make sure you have access to the module in OLAT as soon as possible. It is the student’s responsibility to make sure that they are signed up to the module correctly and they know how to submit coursework through the appropriate OLAT assignment tab. If you have any issues with OLAT contact the IT Helpdesk to resolve the issue.

Furthermore, module materials such as this syllabus and announcements made outside lectures shall be on OLAT. As such, OLAT is an important communication tool for the module.

Emails

I will seek to reply to emails within the following 48 hours. However, this might not always be the case. Additionally, I will not reply to emails during the weekend or after working hours.

Additional Covid-19 Guidelines

Covid-19 continues to pose a threat to our well-being and health. We all need to follow UZH’s guidelines. If you are not feeling well, stay home! I will try to make all relevant materials available to everyone using OLAT: I will share the slides after each session and upload all seminar materials.
Course Reading

Required Readings:
The following texts shall be used extensively throughout the course, so it is recommended that they are purchased:


In addition to these readings, students should keep up to date on current international affairs by reading daily newspapers, or one of the many websites and podcasts devoted to the Global South. This reading is essential as it will allow you to keep up to date with current affairs and identify potential encounter topics. These websites include the following:

- http://www.foreignaffairs.com
- https://globalsecurityreview.com/
- https://wiisglobal.org/blog/
- http://blogs.lse.ac.uk
- https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/the-world-today/2021-12
- Whiskey & International Relations Theory podcast - https://open.spotify.com/show/0RQnVzC1LweZ49GC618N1d
- Social Media and Politics podcast - https://socialmediaandpolitics.org/
Detailed Course Programme

20 February

Introduction and Overview

Key readings


Further reading


27 February

Access and Infrastructure in the Global South

Key readings


Further reading


6 March

Postcolonial and Gender Digital Policies

Key readings


Further reading


13 March

News Reporting and the Media

Key readings


Further reading


20 March

Civil Society and Political Activism

Key readings


Further reading


27 March

Social Media and the Elites

Key readings


Further reading


3 April

Academic Writing

Key readings


24 April

Online Misinformation: Lessons from the Global South

Key readings


Further readings


8 May

Content Moderation, Internet Outages, and Digital Repression

Key readings


Further reading


15 May

Global South? Regional Comparisons and Revision

Key readings


22 May

No class