Social Media and the New Public Sphere

Re-thinking the roles of political communication and public opinion in the age of participatory media

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The role of entertainment and social media in the public sphere

The uses and effects of these media on attitudes, opinions, and behaviors, which have social, economic, and political consequences for individuals, groups, and organizations in civil society
Simply put, how do these media affect our democracy?
Tonight’s Focus:

Social Media and Politics

- The rise of social media in political communication
- Intersections between socially mediated politics and public opinion
- Changing dynamics and roles for political elites, journalists, and publics
- Discussion
Social Media

Data source: Knight Foundation, 2012

- Over 50,000 people list themselves as a "social media consultant" on LinkedIn
- 200 million Tweets are sent per day with over 10 million users
- Over 50 million users on Facebook
- YouTube is the second largest search engine and largest video site on the Internet
- Tumblr is a blogging platform that has over 1.5 billion views per month and is one of the top 50 sites on the Internet
- Flickr is the top online photo sharing site with the most stock images available under common creative licensing (you can use them without paying a fee)

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The Rise of Political Social Media in the United States

Pew Research Center Internet and American Life Project

1994: Senator Diane Feinstein, Democrat of California, put up the first campaign site.


2000: GOP presidential candidate John McCain began raising money online and used the Internet to disseminate political news and information.

2004: Howard Dean's presidential campaign used blogs to generate voter interest, recruit, motivate volunteers and change the interplay between citizens and campaigns.

2008: Social media tools were used including candidate Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, texting services and others. The New York Times said Barack Obama was the first presidential candidature to truly understand social media.

2010: Most Congressional campaigns and over 53% of voters used social media to connect to election information and news.

2012: Mobile apps are expected to rise significantly during election cycle.
Social Media and Politics

- The rise of social media in political communication
- Intersections between socially mediated politics and public opinion
- What we know about the uses and effects of social media in US and international politics
- Changing dynamics and roles for political elites, journalists, and publics
- Discussion
The New Public Sphere.....in the United Stated

July 23, 2007 – The first YouTube Debate

April 20, 2011 – The first White House Facebook Town Hall

July 6, 2011 – The first White House Twitter Town Hall
The New Public Sphere.....in the Middle East

“The structural changes changing our world today are in fact empowering individuals as never before.” (Prepared by: ISN Staff; http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Current-Affairs/)
“In 15 of 21 countries, at least 25% of those polled use social networking sites. Israel (53%) and the U.S. (50%) top the list with the highest percentage of adults who say they use online social networking sites such as Facebook.” (PEW global attitudes survey, 2011).
Social Media and Politics

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Scholars are growing interested in understanding the social media ecosystem.....it is proving to be a complex, dynamic system that is rapidly changing and difficult to empirically examine.
Social Media Matters in US Politics

“During the 2010 elections, more Republicans used Twitter than did Democrats running for the House of Representatives......and empirical evidence suggests that there was a significant relationship between Twitter Use and increased odds of winning the election.” (LaMarre, 2012)
“After analyzing more than 3 million tweets, gigabytes of YouTube content and thousands of blog posts, a new study finds that social media played a central role in shaping political debates in the Arab Spring” (O’Donnell, 2011) 
But Can Social Media Hurt Democracy?

“There has been much coverage of the role of social media in spreading democracy. But what dangers can social media pose when in the wrong hands? Can it be more effective against freedom than working for it?” (NATO, http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2011/Social_Medias/Dark-Side-Social-Media/EN)

Examples: Facebook and Twitter are illegal in China

Authoritarian regimes such as Iran are using social media to identify and track protestors

Wikileaks puts classified information at risk
Information and Democracy

“If you took all of the information produced in the entire history of US journalism and turned it into digital data......it would equal about the amount of information produced in a single day on the Internet” (MIT media lab, Knight foundation media learning seminar, 2012)
Thank You!
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