Exam MEVIT 4320 Autumn 2020

Professor Rune Karlsen

Exam questions

- The exam consists of three (3) questions.
- Each question must be answered in order for you to have fulfilled the requirements of the exam.
- Each question make up one third of the final grade.

A. Does the empirical evidence support Norris' claim of a virtuous circle? Support your position with arguments based on the literature.

B. First, explain what the 'political agenda' refers to. Second, has social media changed the conditions for political agenda setting? Support your position with arguments based on the literature.

C. What does the "trench warfare" metaphor entail? Would you say trench warfare refutes the echo chamber thesis, why or why not? Support your position with arguments based on the literature.

SENSOR GUIDELINES, MEVIT4320 Autumn 2019

Teaching

The course is based on seven lectures and seven seminars. The lectures had the following topics:

1. Introduction: What is political communication? History of the field and key concepts
2. News and political knowledge
3. Social media, selective exposure, polarization, and echo chambers
4. Political agenda setting
5. Populist communication
6. Video Malaise or Virtuous Circle
7. Summing up: political communication today

The seminars have been structured to address each of these topics through a focus on only one scientific article for each seminar. The students were divided into four group – each groups assigned one of four parts of the article to dissect 1) Research question 2) theory, earlier research, 3) research design 4) results and discussion. The aim of the strategy was to make the students more familiar with the structure of articles, and how even very good articles have shortcomings worth discussing. In addition, one seminar was dedicated to academic writing

Syllabus

Books

Author/ title	Sider
Aalberg, Toril og James Curran (2012) *How media inform democracy*. London: Routledge. Chapters 1-4, 6-7, 12	109
Norris, Pippa (2000) *A Virtuous Circle. Political Communication in Postindustrial Societies*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-3, 9-14	169

Chapters

Author/ title	Sider
Esser, F., Stepinska, A., & Hopmann, D. N. (2016). Populism and the Media. Cross-National Findings and Perspectives. In T. Aalberg, F. Esser, C. Reinemann, J. Strömbäck & C. d. Vreese (Eds.), *Populist Political Communication in Europe*. Routledge, 365-380. Lenke	15
Jupskås, Anders R., Elisabeth Ivarsflaten, Bente Kalsnes, and Toril Aalberg (2016) Norway. Populism From Anti-Tax Movement to Government Party. In T. Aalberg, F. Esser, C. Reinemann, J. Strömbäck & C. d. Vreese (Eds.), *Populist Political Communication in Europe*. Routledge, 365-380. Lenke	14
Reinemann, C., Esser, F., Strömbäck, J., Vreese, C. de, & Aalberg, T. (2016). Defining Populism and Populist Communication. In T. Aalberg, F. Esser, C. Reinemann, J. Strömbäck & C. d. Vreese (Eds.), *Populist Political Communication in Europe*. Routledge, 12-25. Lenke	13
Broersma, M., & T. Graham, (2016) Tipping the Balance of Power Social Media and the Transformation of Political Journalism. I Axel Bruns, Eli Skogerbø, Christian Christensen, Anders Olof Larsson, Gunn Enli (eds.) *The Routledge companion to social media and politics*. London: Routledge.	

Chapters available online through university library

Author/ title	Sider
Iyengar, Shanto (2017) A typology of media effects. I Kate Kenski og Kathleen Hall Jamieson (red.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.	11
Stroud, Natalie Jomini (2017) Selective Exposure Theories. I Kate Kenski og Kathleen Hall Jamieson (red.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.	17
Schudson, Michael (2017) How to Think Normatively About News and Democracy. I Kate Kenski og Kathleen Hall Jamieson (red.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.	

Scientific artiles

Author/title/journal	Sider
Aalberg, Toril, Arild Blekesaune, & Eiril Elvestad (2013) Media Choice and Informed Democracy: Toward Increasing News Consumption Gaps in Europe*? International Journal of Press/Politics* 18:281–303. Doi:10.1177/1940161213485990	23
Fletcher, Richard & Rasmus Kleis Nielsen (2017) Are News Audiences Increasingly Fragmented? A Cross-National Comparative Analysis of Cross-Platform News Audience Fragmentation and Duplication. *Journal of Communication*. 67(4): 476-498.	23
Harder, R. A., J. Sevenans, J., & P. V. Aelst, (2017). Intermedia Agenda Setting in the Social Media Age: How Traditional Players Dominate the News Agenda in Election Times. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*. 22(3), 275–293.	
Karlsen, Rune (2015) Followers Are Opinion Leaders: The Role of People in the Flow of Political Communication on and Beyond Social Networking Sites. *European Journal of Communication* 30:301–18. Doi10.1177/0267323115577305	17
Karlsen, Rune, Kari Steen-Johnsen, Dag Wollebæk & Bernard Enjolras (2017) Echo Camber and Trench Warfare Dynamics in Online Debates. *European Journal of Communication*. 32(3) 257- 273. DOI: 10.1177/0267323117695734	18
Prior, Marcus (2005) News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps In Political Knowledge and Turnout. *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3): 577–92.	15
Strömback, Jesper, Monika Djerf-Pierre & Adam Shehata (2016) A Question of Time? A Longitudinal Analysis of the Relationship between News Media Consumption and Political Trust. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 21(1) 88-110.	22
Strömbäck, Jesper., & Lars Nord, (2006) Do Politicians Lead the Tango? A Study of the Relationship between Swedish Journalists and their Political Sources in the Context of Election Campaigns. *European Journal of Communication*. 21 (2): 147– 164.	
van Aelst, Peter, Jesper Strömbäck, Toril Aalberg, Frank Esser, Claes de Vreese, Jörg Matthes, David Hopmann, Susana Salgado, Nicolas Hubé, Agnieszka Stępińska, Stylianos Papathanassopoulos, Rosa Berganza, Guido Legnante, Carsten Reinemann, Tamir Sheafer, and James Stanyer (2017) Political Communication in a High-Choice Media Environment: A Challenge for Democracy? *Annals of the International Communication Association* 1(1): 3– 27.	24
Taber Charles S og Martin Lodge (2006) Motivated skepticism in the evaluation of political beliefs. *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 755–769.	15
Walgrave, Stefaan & Peter Van Aelst (2006) The Contingency of the Mass Media's Political Agenda Setting Power: Toward a Preliminary Theory. *Journal of Communication*. 56 (1) 88–109.	
Zaller, John (2002) New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen, *Political Communication*, 20:2, 109-130	21

Forfatter/tittel	Sider
Karlsen, Rune & Aalberg, Toril (2019) Fueling a Distrustful News Audience? The Effect of Facebook on Peoples' News Perceptions. Unpublished manuscript.	23

In sum 765 papers

General requirements for the exam
All three exam questions must be answered, and are given equal weight for the final grade.

A. Does the empirical evidence support Norris' claim of a virtuous circle? Support your position with arguments based on the literature.

The most relevant literature is Norris (2000) and Strömback et al. (2016), but it is possible to engage with other aspects of the literature as well.

A typical paper should start with an account of the virtuous circle. Most will likely also mention the opposite video malaise perspective claiming television to erode trust and increase cynicism. As for empirical evidence, survey research tend to find high correlations between political news consumption and levels of trust, and the empirical studies above are based on surveys. However, they also describe how experimental studies tend to find negative impact of game frames etc on trust. Students should also be able to discuss how the virtuous circle describes a positive spiral (news influence, trust, influence news consumption etc.), and that Norris is not able to investigate such a relationship as she relies on cross sectional data.

B. First, explain what the 'political agenda' refers to. Second, has social media changed the conditions for political agenda setting? Support your position with arguments based on the literature.

Relevant literature is Walgrave & Van Aelst (2006) Broersma, & Graham, (2016) Harder, Sevenans, & Van Aelst (2017)

A typical paper will discuss the concept of "Political Agenda" based on Walgrave & Van Aelst 2006:89): the question of how political actors determine their priorities, give attention to or ignore political issues, and do, or do not, take decisions or a stance towards these topics. Some might also related this to the agenda setting research tradition, and inter-media agenda setting. It is possible to discuss how social media has changed the condition for political agenda setting in a number of ways. The students should be able to relate their discussion to arguments as well as empirical findings in the literature. Broersma & Graham – offer an argument for fundamental change due to social media.

C. What does the "trench warfare" metaphor entail? Would you say trench warfare refutes the echo chamber thesis, why or why not?

Relevant literature is Karlsen et al. (2017), Taber & Lodge (2006) Fletcher & Nielsen (2017) Stroud (2017)

A typical paper will first describe the trench warfare metaphor, in short: people encounter difference online, but due to disconfirmation bias, (a concept developed in the literature on motivated reasoning), people will mobilize counter arguments when met with opposing opinions online. Opinions will therefore not be modified when opposed, but rather reinforced through what Karlsen et al (2017) call "trench warfare dynamics". It is possible to discuss the second question in a number of ways, but the most straightforward strategy is to point out that trench warfare take issue with the homophily aspect (isolation) of the echo chamber thesis, but not the confirmation bias aspect.