

Program



Groupe de recherche
en communication politique

THE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Seventh edition

CONVERSATIONS ON EMERGENT RESEARCH IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Two days of public conferences with:

C. W. Anderson

University of Leeds

Jennifer Jerit

Stony Brook University

Marina Popescu

Median Research Centre

Matthew Powers

University of Washington

Sandrine Roginsky

Université catholique de Louvain

APRIL 2019

12 & 13

Room C-3061 **Carrefour
des Arts et des Sciences**

Pavillon Lionel-Groulx

3150, rue Jean-Brillant, Montréal (Québec)

www.grcp.ulaval.ca

THE GOAL OF THE GRCP'S INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP IS TO HIGHLIGHT AND DISCUSS INNOVATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGMS IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION. OVER TWO DAYS, FIVE INTERNATIONAL GUEST SCHOLARS WILL PRESENT THEIR LATEST WORK, AS WELL AS DISCUSS THESE CONTRIBUTIONS WITH GRCP'S AUDIENCE AND MEMBERS.

FRIDAY APRIL 12TH

8:30 AM Arrival and greeting of guests

9:00 Opening words by Thierry Giasson, Lead Researcher, GRCP and Juliette De Maeyer

9:10 ***Survey-Based Measures of Political Knowledge: Considerations and Best Practices***
Presentation by Jennifer Jerit, Stony Brook University

Jennifer Jerit is Professor of Political Science at Stony Brook University in Stony Brook, New York. She has interests in public opinion and political communication, with a focus on the features of news coverage that influence whether people learn about politics. Several of her current projects examine best practices for the measurement of public opinion through survey and experimental methods. Her work has been funded by the National Science Foundation and the Economic and Social Research Council, and she has been the recipient of various honors such as the Erik Erikson Early Career Award for Excellence and Creativity in the field of Political Psychology.

In her talk, she explores some of the challenges that scholars confront when measuring the public's level of political knowledge in opinion surveys. Numerous considerations, such as question format and scale construction, will be discussed along with the unique challenges of measuring knowledge in web-based surveys. As opinion polls are increasingly conducted online, respondents can use the web to answer fact-based questions. Her presentation will report the results from a series of experimental and observational studies that show how outside search degrades the measurement properties of political knowledge scales.

10:30 Coffee break

10:40 Discussion on Jennifer Jerit's presentation

11:30 Lunch break

12:40 PM ***What are journalists for today? Comparative insights on the maintenance of social order***
Presentation by Matthew Powers, University of Washington

Matthew Powers is Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Washington in Seattle, and Associate Director of the Department's Center for Communication and Civic Engagement. He is the author of *NGOs as Newsmakers: The Changing Landscape of International News* (2018, Columbia). Currently, he is working on a book with Sandra Vera-Zambrano that compares transformations in French and American journalism.

Questions about journalists' purposes have been asked for at least a century. In his talk, Matthew Powers draws on comparative research conducted with Sandra Vera-Zambrano to offer an empirical—rather than normative—answer to this question. Analyzing interviews with French and American journalists, they show that what journalists are for depends in part on their positions in the field. Those in high positions (e.g., beat reporters and editors) tend to espouse the most legitimate practices like investigative reporting; those in low positions (e.g., freelancers, general assignment reporters) cluster around practices they and others view as less legitimate (e.g., news you can use); those occupying intermediate positions generally embody moderately legitimate practices like storytelling. These distinctions correspond in turn to the different audiences towards which such practices are oriented (e.g., sophisticated journalism for sophisticated people, simple news for simple people).

They interpret this empirical diversity of journalists' positions and viewpoints as legitimating and reproducing existing social hierarchies in France and the United States, and contrast this interpretation with characterizations of contemporary journalism as marked primarily by chaos and disorder.

2:00 PM Discussion on Matthew Powers' presentation

2:40 Coffee break

2:50 ***La fabrique du capital médiatique à l'aune des réseaux socio-numériques : entre permanence et reconfiguration des activités de médiatisation des députés européens plongée dans l'écosystème médiatique et numérique de la bulle européenne***

Presentation by Sandrine Roginsky, Université catholique de Louvain

Sandrine Roginsky is a professor of communication at UCLouvain, Belgium, since 2012. She is interested in the digital uses of politics and her work focuses on European institutions and their multiplicity of actors: from deputies to collaborators, not to mention journalists and other "stakeholders". She herself has worked in this professional space for eight years (2004-2012) before joining the university.

Based on an ethnography of the working practices of the European MEPs, the goal of the presentation is to put the digital uses in their media and political context to understand the role of social media platforms in the construction and the accumulation of media capital, but also in political practice. The imminence of the next European elections (in May 2019) is a favorable moment to retrospectively examine a decade of digital use in the European bubble. The questions it generates lead us to question the methodological approaches in their capacity to grasp the complexity inherent to the object studied, over a relatively long time. The talk hopes to demonstrate the contributions of the qualitative paradigm, that of the field survey, and the challenges posed when said field is plural, integrating both the "online" and "offline" worlds which are connected and interlinked.

4:10 Discussion on Sandrine Roginsky's presentation

5:00 End of day one

SATURDAY APRIL 13TH

9:00 AM Arrival and greeting of guests

9:30 ***"F is for Fake, A is for Angry, B is for Boring: Sophisticated News in an Irrational Age."***

Presentation by C. W. Anderson, University of Leeds

C.W. Anderson is a Professor of Media and Communication at the University of Leeds, and the author or co-editor of five books: *Rebuilding the News* (Temple), *Remaking the News* (MIT), *The Sage Handbook of Digital Journalism* (Sage), *Journalism: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford) and *Apostles of Certainty: Data Journalism and the Politics of Doubt* (Oxford).

For those of us who have been studying elite, technologically sophisticated forms of journalism for the past several years, one question is increasingly rearing its ugly head: should we all just have been studying professional wrestling instead? In an age of populism, Trump, Brexit, Le Pen, and "fake news", what is the value of algorithmic, data, automated, and other higher forms of journalistic work, and what do we as scholars and concerned citizens get out of studying these phenomena? This talk draws on and extends a recently completed book project that tried to tell the history of quantitative journalism in the United States from 1900 to the present. The talk argues that journalism in the United States has become increasingly exact, objective, and scientific, but that the relationship between this journalism of certitude and public problems is also increasingly fraught. Given that, what ought scholars do now? The second half of the talk takes on this question of "what next" and argues that we need to refine, but not sever, the link between technology, journalism and politics.

- 10:50** Coffee break
- 11:00** Discussion of C. W. Anderson's presentation
- 12:00** Lunch Break

1:00 PM ***Can norms of civility and tolerance be institutionalised online? Theoretical and empirical insights from the project 'Less Hate, More Speech. An Experimental and Comparative Study in Media and Political Elites' Ability to Nurture Civil, Tolerant, Pro-Democratic Citizens'***

Presentation by Marina Popescu, Median Research Centre

Marina Popescu (PhD University of Essex 2008) is a political scientist working at the intersection between political behaviour, media and journalism. Previously a tenured faculty at the Central European University in Budapest, and a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Essex, she currently heads the Median Research Centre, a research and public information non-profit in Bucharest, Romania. As part of her work on cross-national contextual determinants of media effects, she has led the European Media Systems Survey, which has been widely used in international scholarly publications.

The talk will focus on recent research that explored how rules promoting civility and tolerance can be initiated, developed and implemented, and maybe accepted and effectively turned into norms. Our design was based on a collaboration with major news outlets to develop journalist-run comment moderation on large and popular media sites in Romania as a field quasi-experiment. We charted the effects and constraints of such a moderation process through quantitative and qualitative analysis of comments, short term experiments within the comments section, surveys and focus groups with users and journalists, interviews with moderators and newsroom leaders. Far from being solely an issue of online behaviour, the institutionalisation of civility and tolerance online is contingent on the values and motivations of different actors and national macroconditions, such as the characteristics of the media system and societal attitudes regarding fairness, equality and democracy.

- 2:20** Coffee Break
- 2:30** Discussion of Marina Popescu's presentation
- 3:30** **Closing words** by Thierry Giasson, GRCP, and Juliette De Maeyer. End of the Workshop.

The workshop will take place in room C-3061 of Pavillon Lionel-Groulx at Université de Montréal, located at 3150, rue Jean-Brillant, in Montréal.

An interactive map of campus may be downloaded here:

<https://plan-campus.umontreal.ca/montreal/>

The majority of presentations will be given in English, but questions can be asked in French or English.

