



Digital Society – International Summer School 2019

Social Media as a Digital Agora for Political Arguments, Opinions, and Ideas?

July 15th - July 19th, 2019

University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany
Forschungsverbund “Digitale Gesellschaft”

Call for Participation

In ancient Greece, a central part of social life took place at the agora. At this physical venue, citizens did not only trade all kinds of commodities, but also deliberate about important societal issues and politics. Therefore, the agora can be considered as the birthplace of democracy. Today, social media seem to bring this ancient Greek idea into a digital world: Services such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram enable citizens not only to publish political thoughts or initiatives in the form of videos, pictures, or status entries but also to have civically relevant interactions with other citizens at large scale. While this might be seen as a potentially enriching tool for democratic societies, nowadays, it also has to be discussed in the light of less desirable observations such as uncivilized exchanges (“hate speech”), the spread of misinformation (“fake news”), the presence of manipulative entities (“social bots”), or communication in ideologically homogeneous spheres (“filter bubbles” or “echo chambers”).

Empirical evidence in the field of computer-mediated political communication has grown in the last decades. Still, it remains a pressing need for researchers to systematically identify the circumstances under which politically relevant communication over network technologies can become beneficial versus detrimental for individuals and societies. What are the boundary conditions under which social media serve as marketplaces wherein citizens can contribute to deliberation and rational exchanges of arguments? Which factors influence whether this can lead to better informed (political) decisions? Which kind of citizens benefit most or least when using social media in political contexts? What are long-term consequences of political discourses via social networking platforms? How can computational methods be used to understand the mechanisms within these platforms better and to improve the conditions for the user? What are ethical implications of political deliberation online and how can we come to a well-grounded normative stance? Answering these questions clearly demands a multi-disciplinary approach combining communication studies, psychology, computer science, social media analytics, ethics, and political science. This Summer School, hosted by the Forschungsverbund “[Digitale Gesellschaft NRW](#)” and organized by the University of Duisburg-Essen and University of Bonn, intends to bring these disciplines together and to offer a fruitful setting for senior and junior scholars to jointly work on current questions of political communication in computer-mediated contexts.

The Summer School is open for a total of **40 PhD candidates** with different disciplinary backgrounds who study civically relevant communication through contemporary technologies. PhD participants are offered (a) extensive training in discussing current research problems following keynote presentations and in small-group workshops, (b) the opportunity to network with other PhD students and leading scholars, and (c) an environment to present their current work in the form of a poster exposition.

Application

To apply, PhD students are asked to submit an **abstract of 600 words** of their own research. Accepted abstracts will be presented in a high-density session including a short presentation and a poster. Please submit your application online ([here](#)). The deadline is **April 20, 2019**.

Program

The Summer School will include daily keynote lectures, parallel workshops on different topics such as online incivility, political participation and polarization through social technologies, agent-based and topic modeling of online communication processes and ethical aspects regarding political communication (analyses) as well as a poster exhibition and social events. Further details will be published soon.

Dates

Application Deadline: April 20, 2019

Acceptance Notification: May 10, 2019

Summer School: July 15th - July 19th, 2019

Venue

Die Wolfsburg (Mülheim an der Ruhr) <https://die-wolfsburg.de>

Speakers

Gina Chen, School of Journalism, The University of Texas at Austin, USA

Shira Dvir-Gvirzman, Faculty of Social Sciences, Tel Aviv University, Israel

Homero Gil de Zúñiga, Department of Communication, University of Vienna, Austria

Patricia Rossini, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University, USA

Christoph Bieber, Institute for Political Science, University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany

Annie Waldherr, Department of Communication, University of Münster, Germany

Thorsten Zesch & Björn Ross, Department for Cognitive Science and Computer Science, University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany

Karsten Weber, Faculty General Studies and Microsystems Engineering, Ostbayerische Technischen Hochschule (OTH) Regensburg, Germany

Tobias Rothmund, Department of Psychology of Communication and Media Use, University of Jena, Germany

Fee

Participation at the Summer School will be free. Costs for travel and accommodation will not be covered (except for members of the Forschungsverbund "Digitale Gesellschaft NRW" Graduiertenkolleg und Nachwuchsforschungsgruppen).

Organizing Team from the Forschungsverbund "Digitale Gesellschaft"

University of Duisburg-Essen

Nicole Krämer
German Neubaum
Manuel Cargnino
Jan Philipp Kluck
Daniel Röchert

University of Bonn

Mario Anastasiadis

Contact

dg.summerschool2019@uni-due.de

More information: <https://www.uni-due.de/sozialpsychologie/summer-school/>