Trump, Brexit and Corbyn: Social Media, Authenticity and Post-Truth Politics

Programme

11:30 – 11:45 Coffee & Registration

11:45 – 12:00 Welcome

12:00 – 13:45 Panel 1: Politics, Trump & Brexit
Chair: Professor Mark Wheeler, London Metropolitan University

The emotional politics of Donald Trump and the rise of angry populism
Professor Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, Cardiff University, JOMEC

Fatalism and the triumph of Trump (2016) and Brexit (2016)
Professor Chris Rojek, City, University of London

The performance of mainstream politicians: politics as usual?
Professor Stephen Coleman and Dr. Julie Firmstone, University of Leeds

Respondent – Professor Dominic Wring, Loughborough University

13:45 – 14:15 Lunch

14:15 – 16:00 - Panel 2: Social Media & Democracy
Chair: Professor Petros Iosifidis, City, University of London

Cheerleaders or Free Radicals: exploring the nature of party supporter interactions during GE2017, Dr. Darren G. Lilleker, Bournemouth University and Duje Bonacci, University of Zagreb

Do Tabloids Poison the Well of Social Media? Explaining Democratically Dysfunctional News Sharing,
Professor Andrew Chadwick, Loughborough University, Cristian Vaccari and Ben O'Loughlin

Fact-checking the election: informing debate on social media?
Dr Jen Birks, University of Nottingham

Respondent: Professor Mark Wheeler, London Metropolitan University
16:15 – 17:15 - Plenary
James Mills (Labour Party), Petros Iosifidis and Mark Wheeler (Javnost Article – brief presentation).

17:15 – 18:00 - Reception

Speaker Abstracts

The emotional politics of Donald Trump and the rise of angry populism

Professor Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, Cardiff University JOMEC

Abstract
This session will examine the emotional politics of Donald Trump – the ways in which he elicits and expresses particular emotions. The rise of Donald Trump, I argue, has contributed to a shift in the “emotional regime,” or the ways in which we talk about and are governed by emotions. The Trump era has made anger the dominant political emotion. This anger cannot be viewed in isolation, but should be seen as part of the rise of a broader trend of “angry populism,” evidenced in the UK’s Brexit and the success of right-wing populist parties across Europe.

Karin Wahl-Jorgensen is Professor in the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies. Her research focuses on journalism and citizenship, and she has authored or edited six books, including the forthcoming Emotions, Media and Public Life (Polity). Research discussed in this session is based on this book, as well as several recent chapters and articles. Wahl-Jorgensen is a frequent media commentator and contributor to The Conversation, and recently appeared on BBC Radio 4’s “Thinking Allowed” to discuss her research on Trump and emotions.

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Fatalism and the triumph of Trump (2016) and Brexit (2016)

Chris Rojek, City, University of London

Abstract
Brexit and the election of Donald Trump in 2016 are widely regarded to have dented the propositions in Social Science about the inevitability of globalization and cosmopolitanism. It is as if a stone has been unturned, and new discussions about the ‘left behind’, the ‘excluded’ and the relationship of both to elite-professional power in the state-corporate axis are being permitted to flourish. Surprisingly, what is missing from the debate is the question of fatalism. That is, the belief that what happens in social development is a matter of chance. Fatalism carries with it the conviction that success in life is down to luck, a mere throw of the dice. Fatalism is the antithesis of Social Science. By definition it maintains that when it comes to meaningful intervention in social relations knowledge and power are sterile. This paper aims to clarify the meaning of fatalism and relate it to Brexit and the Trump victory. It argues that fatalism presents one of the biggest challenges to the reformation of Social Science

Chris Rojek is Professor of Sociology at City, University of London. He has held four Professorial appointments in his career. He regards himself to be a General Sociologist. Lately, he has written on
The social consequences of Mega Events (*Event Power* (2013)), and the reconfiguration of trust in digital society (*Presumed Intimacy* (2016)). In addition to working on fatalism, he is co-authoring a book on ‘Lifestyle Guru’s: Para-Social Intimacy in Low Trust Society’ (Polity).

**The performances of mainstream politicians: politics as usual?**

Stephen Coleman and Julie Firmstone, University of Leeds

**Abstract**

This paper presents a cross-nationally comparative analysis of the performance of mainstream politicians. By ‘mainstream’, we refer to leaders of established political parties with a record of being in government; we contrast these to ‘populist’ political leaders who seek to disrupt mainstream politics. Empirically grounded in a study of how politics is performed and discursively constructed in television news during the 2014 EU election campaigns, the paper presents a distinctive methodological approach to the qualitative cross national comparison of how roles and relationships between political actors, journalists and the public are performed and represented in the media. The 2014 European election was a critical symbolic moment in time during which the meanings (and legitimacy) of European politics were being shaped in a way which is indicative of the situation today. Taking coverage from the two weeks before the election we analyze the appearances of mainstream politicians in the most popular source of news about Europe – television news. The multimodal discourse analysis of news in five countries (France, Italy, Greece, Sweden and the UK) captures both the visual characteristics and the spoken discourse of politicians’ performances. The analysis explores the performative frames and discursive strategies that politicians employ in order to establish themselves as serious and authoritative personae, while at the same time attempting to realize qualities of authenticity and public representativeness. In addition, we explore the discursive strategies of journalists in constructing mainstream politicians, and ask what role journalists play in the construction (and deconstruction) of politicians as mainstream.

... Professor Dominic Wring

Dominic Wring (Loughborough University) will act as a respondent for the event.

... Cheerleaders or Free Radicals: exploring the nature of party supporter interactions during GE2017

Darren G. Lilleker, Bournemouth University and Duje Bonacci, University of Zagreb

**Abstract**

Research on conversations within the Facebook communities on each side of the Brexit campaign offered an insight into the agenda of the respective sides within British society. This paper expands this to focus on the 2017 UK General Election, exploring how parties used their Facebook campaign pages and what conversations their usage elicited. The Jeremy Corbyn led Labour party were the most frequent posters, and had a clear advantage in terms of the numbers of Facebook activists who extended their reach: liking and sharing their content. The next stage of the research will be to interrogate the comments, also the most numerous, and assess whether the party Facebook followers exist in a party centric supportive echo chamber or whether there are similar levels of divergence of views found in the Remain camp communities. The paper will contribute to debates on how we can understand psychological and attitudinal trends through the use of big data analysis
of social media content while also exploring the nature of interactions especially in relation to whether we can detect the presence of Corbynista movement activists attempting to shape Labour’s agenda.

Do Tabloids Poison the Well of Social Media? Explaining Democratically-Dysfunctional News Sharing

Andrew Chadwick, Loughborough University, Cristian Vaccari and Ben O’Loughlin

Abstract
Both the use of social media for sharing political information and the status of news as an essential raw material for good citizenship are generating increasing public concern. We address the debate using a new theoretical framework and a unique combination of survey data and data from observed news sharing behaviours on social media. Using a media-as-resources perspective, we theorize that there are elective affinities between tabloid news and misinformation and disinformation behaviors on social media. Integrating four datasets we constructed during the 2017 UK election campaign—individual-level data on news sharing (N=1,525,748 tweets), website data (N=17,989 web domains), news article data (N=641 articles), and data from a custom survey of Twitter users (N=1,313 respondents)—we find that sharing tabloid news on social media is a significant predictor of democratically-dysfunctional misinformation and disinformation behaviours. We explain the consequences of this finding for the civic culture of social media and the direction of future scholarship on “fake news.”

Factchecking the election: informing debate on social media?

Dr Jen Birks, University of Nottingham

Abstract
In political discourse analysis (Fairclough & Fairclough 2012), ‘facts’ are the premises behind political arguments about what we should do. ‘Fact-checking’ journalism (such as Channel 4 FactCheck and BBC Reality Check) therefore provides corroboration for some of the premises behind manifesto pledges, and challenges others. An analysis of this work and its impact on political debate around election campaigns can therefore illuminate the extent to which the ideals of deliberative democracy are being met, or overturned and ignored in a ‘post-truth’ political environment. This paper will focus in particular on the fact-checking organisations’ activity on Twitter, promoting their blog posts and engaging in shorter direct interventions, for example live fact-checking TV debates. As well as the tweets themselves, this qualitative analysis will examine the links to blog posts and supporting evidence, and engagement with the tweets from other twitter users, including the numbers of likes and shares, but also the substantive content of the replies. These responses and exchanges variously criticise the logic of fact-checkers’ arguments, the methodology and independence of their sources, and the policies and politicians being fact-checked, and represent a fascinating microcosm of the interplay between reason, values, emotion and ideology in political argumentation.