

Ph.D. course, IT University of Copenhagen *Citizenship in the Digital Republic*

Lecturers:

Prof. *Andrew Feenberg* (Simon Fraser University), Prof. *Peter Dahlgren* (Lund University), Prof. *Maria Bakardjieva* (University of Calgary), Associate Professor *Lisbeth Klastrup* (IT University of Copenhagen), Assistant Professor *Bjarki Valtysson* (IT University of Copenhagen)

Dates of the course:

May 30 – June 1, 2011

Organiser(s):

Dr. Maria Bakardjieva and Christina Neumayer

Course description:

This course brings together four thematic threads with a common focus on the concept of citizenship in a society characterized by the thorough penetration of digital information and communication technologies in all spheres of life. Citizenship, broadly defined, includes any form of democratic participation in social systems – political, technological and expert. The digital republic, for its part, is understood as a political community defined by the governance of the people. How is such governance possible in a digital society? What opportunities for involvement do citizens have in a densely mediated polis? Can technological development itself be democratically steered? The goal of the course is to critically explore the new forms of democratic participation that the pervasive presence of digital media in contemporary societies affords and requires. The course aims at attracting and giving a forum to students whose interests focus on participatory forms of design, political and civic involvement, technological politics, regulation and education. The themes comprising the course take up the concept of citizenship in four distinct contexts:

- public participation in technological development, design and policy;
- digital media technologies and civic engagement;
- digital media and citizenship in everyday life
- digital media and cultural institutions

The first theme will encompass issues of public participation in technological development, design and policy. The questions raised under this rubric will address the possibilities and challenges of democratizing technology. Starting with a discussion of the relationship between technology and society from a

philosophical perspective, this theme will go on to engage actual cases and strategies of public involvement in technical design and decision-making.

The second theme will look at the uptake and appropriation of digital media technologies for the purposes of civic action and political participation. It will review the advances made by social movements and civic activists in rallying support and making an impact on political life and the political establishment through the creative use of digital media. The new civic cultures emerging from these processes and their relation to digital technologies and uses will be examined.

The third theme will be centered on the notion of ‘mundane citizenship’. It will propose directions for the empirical investigation of the new practices of citizenship anchored in everyday life. The premise of this investigation is that digital media of communication are bringing knowledge, collective mobilization and civic action spatially and humanly closer to ordinary people. As a result, ordinary citizens acquire the competence, confidence and resolve to intervene into the affairs of abstract systems of all sorts. Thus the definition of activism needs to be revisited and a wider gamut of forms such as ‘subactivism’ should be given serious consideration.

The fourth theme takes the notion of citizenship to the terrain of cultural institutions and cultural practices. It discusses the liberating and repressive forces at play in the way users co-produce culture online both within and outside formal cultural spheres. It also calls for a more critical reflection on what cultural citizenship is and on the degree to which what we see online in terms of activity is in fact representative of the few, rather than the many? If we want to use cultural mundane citizenship as leverage for citizen engagement in general and as an inspiration for future cultural institutional practices, it is important to ask: what makes people engage in cultural activities online, what new forms of activities are emerging and how should we conceptually and theoretically address current use practices?

Readings: TBA – will be drawn from a selection of pieces suggested by the lecturers. A list of required readings plus copies of some of the texts will be available on the course blog. It is students’ responsibility to get hold of the required texts that are not provided on the blog.

Program

May 30

- 9:30 Welcome and introduction to the course.
Student introductions with interests and paper topics.
Organizational items (45 min).
- 10:15 Break
- 10:30 Theme 1 Lecture – Prof. Andrew Feenberg (90 min)
- 12:00 *Break - Lunch*
- 13:00 Theme 1 Seminar (structured discussion of the assigned readings led by Prof. Feenberg, 90 min)
- 14:30 *Break*
- 14:45 Theme 1 Student Paper Presentations and Discussion (90 min)
- 16:15 *Break*
- 16:30 Theme 1 Wrap-up and work on course blog – assigned student team (45 min)
- 17:15 Close

Dinner and dance – optional.

May 31:

- 9:30 Theme 2 Lecture – Prof. Peter Dahlgren (90 min)
- 11:00 *Break*
- 11:15 Theme 2 Seminar (structured discussion of the assigned readings led by Prof. Dahlgren, 90 min)
- 12:45 *Break - Lunch*
- 13:45 Theme 2 Student Paper Presentations and Discussion (90 min)
- 15:15 *Break*
- 15:30 Theme 2 Wrap-up and work on course blog – assigned student team (45 min)
- 16:15 Close

Dinner and music performance attendance – optional.

June 1:

- 09:30 Theme 3 Lecture and Seminar – Prof. Maria Bakardjieva (90 min)
- 11:00 *Break*
- 11:15 Theme 4 Lecture and Seminar – Profs. Lisbeth Klastруп and Bjarki Valtýsson (90 min)
- 12:45 *Break - Lunch*
- 13:45 Theme 3 and 4 Student Paper Presentations and Discussion (90 min)
- 15:15 *Break*
- 15:30 Themes 3 and 4 Wrap-up and work on course blog – assigned student teams (45 min)

16:15 *Break*

16:30 Closing discussion: key concepts; central debates; directions for further investigation; practical implications (60 min).

17:30 Close

Good-bye dinner- optional.

Requirements:

Students are expected to choose a paper topic within one of the four course themes and prepare an extended (1,500 words) proposal prior to the course. Paper proposals should be sent to Dr. Maria Bakardjieva (bakardji[at]ucalgary.ca) and Christina Neumayer (chne[at]itu.dk) no later than May 13, 2011. Students will present these proposals during the course and will receive feedback from another student and the professor. Each student is expected to prepare a response (app. 5 minutes) to another student's paper. Students should be familiar with the assigned readings for all themes and should take part in all seminar discussions. Student teams will be assigned the task of writing entries for the course blog at the end of each day. Each student is expected to participate in one such team.

Students should complete and submit their papers to the instructor in each theme no later than July 30, 2011.

Credits:

5 ECTS (for course participation 3 full days; paper proposal; paper presentation; response preparation; discussion participation, final paper).

Participants:

PhD students in the areas of communication, interaction design, digital media, social studies of technology, political communication, Internet studies.

Course fees:

As per ITU policy, the course is free of charge. However, students are responsible for covering their own meals, transportation, and accommodation.

Note: Partaking in lunches, dinners and other organized events is optional. Participants are expected to cover the cost themselves.

Accommodation and Transportation:

Practical information regarding accommodation and transportation can be found [here](#)².

How to sign up:

Sign up by sending an e-mail to Christina Neumayer (chne[at]itu.dk)

All students must submit with their application to the course a short abstract of their work as it relates to the course (not more than 500 words). Applications should be submitted by April 28, 2011. Enrollment is limited to 20 participants.