



Course Syllabus

Political communication: Information influence as a security problem – reading course

Politisk kommunikation: Informationspåverkan som säkerhetsproblem - läskurs

Course Code	2SS079	Main Field of Study	Political Science: Security Studies
Valid from Semester	Spring 2024	Department	Department of Political Science and Law
Education Cycle	Advanced level	Subject	Political Science
Scope	7.5	Language of Instruction	The teaching is conducted in English.
Progression	A1N	Decided by	The Research and Education Board's Course Syllabus Committee at the Swedish Defence University
Grading Scale	Fail, Pass, Pass with Distinction	Decision date	2023-06-13
Revision	1.3		

Entry Requirements

Bachelor's degree worth 180 credits, of which 90 credits are in Political Science or another relevant subject. English proficiency equivalent to English 6 or English B is also required.

Course Content and Structure

The organized spread of harmful information in the digital sphere by authoritarian states and other actors, including in connection with elections, is increasingly seen as a serious problem among scholars. The aim of this course is to provide the student with deepened knowledge – empirical, theoretical, conceptual - on the particular kind of political communication that can be labelled 'information influence'. The student will learn about how projection of political messages across national borders can threaten societal cohesion, democracy and security. The problem is situated in a historical context, in order to distinguish modern information influence from traditional propaganda.

The course provides knowledge on differences between legitimate political communication and malign information influence, including disinformation and heavily skewed illiberal communication. The course problematizes the role of social media and private companies such as Facebook in spreading problematic information.

The student is presented with dilemmas in regards to the countering of harmful information influence. The course also situates the problem within the field of security studies and adjacent fields.

The course consists of self-directed learning.

The teacher provides support in the form of instructions for reading, which are intended to help the student to structure the work. The teacher also clarifies how different parts of the literature hangs together and how texts can be read to facilitate learning.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course the student should be able to:

Knowledge and understanding:

- in a deepened way account for and discuss cases of, and relevant conceptualizations and theoretical perspectives on, flows of information as a political problem in the realm of security, from the viewpoint of security studies and adjacent academic fields,

Skills and competence:

- identify and discuss political and ethical dilemmas in the scientific study and political management of information influence,

Judgement and approach:

- in a deepened way assess to what extent information influence threatens different values and referent objects and when

information influence is to be seen as a security problem.

Type of Instruction

Independent Study

Assessment**Examination**

Scope: 7.5

Grading Scale: Fail, Pass, Pass with Distinction

The course is examined through a written take-home examination and through an oral examination.

The examiner may decide to request supplementary assignments in order to achieve a passing grade on the course. Examination papers submitted after the closing date will not be graded unless special circumstances exist that are acceptable to the examiner.

Supplementary assignments shall be submitted no later than three working days after the result and supplementary assignment for the examination in question have been notified, unless special circumstances exist that are acceptable to the examiner.

Grading

Grading takes place through a three-point grading scale: Fail (U), Pass (G) and Pass with Distinction (VG).

To achieve the grade Pass (G), the student has to achieve a pass on the written and oral examination. To achieve the grade Pass with distinction (VG) the student must, in addition to the demands for a Pass (G), achieve a Pass with distinction on the written examination.

Grading criteria are reported at the latest at the start of the course.

Restrictions in Number of Examinations

There is no limit on the total number of examination opportunities.

Restrictions Concerning Degree

The course cannot be included in a degree with another course whose content fully or partially corresponds to the content of this course.

Transitional Provisions

When the course is no longer offered or when the course content has changed substantially, the student has the right to be examined once per semester during a three-term period in accordance with this syllabus.

Miscellaneous

If the Swedish Defence University has formally decided that the student is entitled to receive special educational support due to a disability, the examiner may decide on alternative forms of examination for the student.

Upon completion of the course, an evaluation will be conducted under the auspices of the Course Convenor, which will form the basis for any changes to the course.

Reading List

Political communication: Information influence as a security problem – reading course

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Course Code	2SS079
Revision	1.3
Reading List Valid from Date	2023-10-16
Reading List Decided Date	2023-10-16

Argemi M and Fine GA (2019) Faked News: The Politics of Rumour in British World War II Propaganda. *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 12(2):176-193.

Armitage R and Vaccari C (2021) Misinformation and disinformation. In *The Routledge Companion to Media Disinformation and Populism*, eds Howard Tumber and Silvio Waisbord. Oxon/New York: Taylor and Francis: 38-48.

Bastos M and Farkas J (2019) 'Donald Trump Is My President!': The Internet Research Agency Propaganda Machine. *Social Media + Society*: 1–13

Benkler Y Faris R and Roberts H (2018) Network Propaganda. Chapters 1-2 pp. 3-74 , 7-8, pp. 225-268, 9 pp. 269-288, 13, pp. 351-380.

Bjola C (2018) The Ethics of Countering Digital Propaganda. *Ethics and International Affairs* 32(3): 305-315.

Bradshaw S (2022) Playing Both Sides: Russian State-Backed Media Coverage of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*: 1-27.

Bradshaw S and Henle A (2021) The Gender Dimensions of Foreign Influence Operations. *International Journal of Communication* (15): 4596–4618.

Colley Thomas & Moore Martin (2022): News as geopolitics: China, CGTN and the 2020 US presidential election, *The Journal of International Communication*, DOI: 10.1080/13216597.2022.2120522

Crilly R and Chatterje-Doody P (2021) Government disinformation in war and conflict. In *The Routledge Companion to Media Disinformation and Populism*, eds Howard Tumber, and Silvio Waisbord. Oxon/New York: Taylor and Francis: 242-252.

Dawson A and Innes M (2019) How Russia's Internet Research Agency Built its Disinformation Campaign. *The Political Quarterly* 90 (2):245-256.

Doroshenko, L and Lukito, J (2021) Trollfare: Russia's Disinformation Campaign During Military Conflict in Ukraine. *International Journal of Communication*, p. 4662-4689.

Elshehawy A Gavras K Marinov N Nanni F and Schoen H (2021). Illiberal Communication and Election Intervention during the Refugee Crisis in Germany. *Perspectives on Politics*: 1-19.

Glazunova S Bruns A Hurcombe E Montaña-Niño S X Coulibaly S Obeid A K (2022) Soft power, sharp power? Exploring RT's dual role in Russia's diplomatic toolkit. *Information, communication & society*. [Online] ahead-of-print (ahead-of-print), 1–26.

Hameleers M (2023) Disinformation as a context-bound phenomenon: toward a conceptual clarification integrating actors, intentions and techniques of creation and dissemination, *Communication Theory*, 33 (1): 1-10.

Innes M Innes H Roberts C Harmston D and Grinnell D (2021) The normalisation and domestication of digital disinformation: on the alignment and consequences of far-right and Russian State (dis)information operations and campaigns in Europe. *Journal of Cyber Policy* 6 (1): 31-49.

Moore M & Colley T (2022): Two International Propaganda Models: Comparing RT and CGTN's 2020 US Election Coverage, *Journalism Practice*, DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2022.2086157

Oates S (2020) The easy weaponization of social media: why profit has trumped security for U.S. companies. *Digital War* 1:117–122

Oates S (2021). Rewired Propaganda. Propaganda, misinformation, and populism in the digital age. In *The Routledge Companion to Media Disinformation and Populism* eds Howard Tumber and Silvio Waisbord. Oxon/New York: Taylor and Francis S: 71- 79

Petersen E and Allamong MB (2021) The Influence of Unknown Media on Public Opinion: Evidence from Local and Foreign News



Sources. The American Political Science Review: 1-15.

Rodgers J Lanoszka A (2021) Russia's rising military and communication power: From Chechnya to Crimea. *Media, War and Conflict*: 1-18.

Saunders, R, Crilley, R and Chatterje-Doody P N (2022) ICYMI: RT and Youth-Oriented Broadcasting as (Geo) Political Culture Jamming. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 27 (3) 696-717.

Szostek J (2020) What happens to public diplomacy during information war? Critical reflections on the conceptual framing of international communication. *International Journal of Communication* 14: 2728-2748.

Wagnsson C and Hellman M (2018) Normative Power Europe Caving In? EU identity projection under pressure of Russian information warfare. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 56 (5):1161-1177.

Wagnsson C (2020): What is at stake in the information sphere? Anxieties about malign information influence among ordinary Swedes. *European Security* 29 (4): 397-415.

Wagnsson C and Barzanje C (2021) A framework for analysing antagonistic narrative strategies: A Russian tale of Swedish Decline. *Media, War and conflict* 14 (2): 239-257.

Ördén H (2019) Deferring substance: EU policy and the information threat. *Intelligence and National Security* 34 (39): 421-437.