

**MTS 525**  
***Understanding Media Markets: Users, Makers and Metrics***

Fall, 2014  
Monday 3-6pm

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**Description:** Digital media create a marketplace where an endless number of options compete for a limited supply of public attention – an environment where building audiences is a prerequisite for making money or exercising influence. This course explains how the preferences and habits of media users, the strategies and constraints of media makers, and the growing prevalence of media metrics form a dynamic marketplace that shapes public attention. Topics include theories of media choice, the role of social networks, sharing economies, audience-making strategies, bias in measurement, recommender systems, big data, audience fragmentation, and the marketplace of ideas.

**Readings:** The texts for the course are listed below. The first is available at the Norris bookstore. Everything else is available on the course website (Canvas) at <https://northwestern.instructure.com/>

Webster, J. G. (2014). *The Marketplace of Attention: How Audiences Take Shape in a Digital Age*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Lessig, L. (2008). *Remix: Making art and commerce thrive in the hybrid economy*. New York: Penguin Press. Pages 116-224. On the course website under Creative Commons.

**Grades:** Your course grade is based on a final paper and the presentation associated with that paper. The paper should, at a minimum, offer a thoughtful review of some body of audience studies literature that is of particular interest to you. A proposal for your paper is due October 13<sup>th</sup>. Its final scope and substance will be determined in consultation with the professor.

***Schedule of Classes***

**Sept 29      Understanding Media Markets**

Webster Chapter 1 (The Marketplace of Attention)

**Oct 6      Users: Preferences**

Webster Chapter 2 (Media Users)

Prior, M. (2005). "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3): 577-592.

Garrett, R. K. and N. J. Stroud (2014). "Partisan Paths to Exposure Diversity: Differences in Pro- and Counterattitudinal News Consumption." *Journal of Communication*: n/a-n/a.

Savage, M. and M. Gayo (2011). "Unraveling the omnivore: A field analysis of contemporary musical taste in the United Kingdom." *Poetics* 39(5): 337-357.

Bartsch, A. and F. M. Schneider (2014). "Entertainment and Politics Revisited: How Non-Escapist Forms of Entertainment Can Stimulate Political Interest and Information Seeking." *Journal of Communication* 64(3): 369-396.

Metzger, M. J., A. J. Flanagin and R. B. Medders (2010). "Social and heuristic approaches to credibility evaluation online." *Journal of Communication* 60(3): 413-439.

**Discussion Question(s):** With so much to choose from, what factors might promote audience loyalties (i.e., seeking out or avoiding types of media)? Should the existence of audience loyalties matter to anyone outside media industries? How do media users cope with so many choices? What strategies do you use? Do any of these strategies have biases? What are they?

### **Oct 13          Users: Structures**

Granovetter, M. S. (1973). "The strength of weak ties." *American Journal of Sociology*: 1360-1380.

Wu, S., J. M. Hofman, W. A. Mason and D. J. Watts (2011). Who says what to whom on twitter. International World Wide Web Conference, Hyderabad, India, ACM.

Messing, S. and S. J. Westwood (2012). "Selective Exposure in the Age of Social Media: Endorsements Trump Partisan Source Affiliation When Selecting News Online." *Communication Research*.

Berger, J. and K. L. Milkman (2012). "What Makes Online Content Viral?" *Journal of Marketing Research* 49(2): 192-205.

Taneja, H. & Wu, A. (in press). Integrating Access Blockage with Cultural Factors to explain Web Use Behavior: The Case of China's Great Firewall. *The Information Society*.

**View:** *Generation Like* at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/generation-like/>

**Discussion Question(s):** What are the social and technological structures that bear on media use and its consequences? People studying media effects, have long been aware of the role of opinion leaders or "influentials" in face-to-face networks. Are there opinion leaders in social media? How do they achieve that status? Why do some things go viral?

### **Proposal Due**

**Oct 20          Individual Meetings**

**Oct 27          The Media**

Webster Chapter 3 (The Media)

Lessig, L. (2008). *Remix: Making art and commerce thrive in the hybrid economy*. New York, Penguin Press. Pages 116-224.

Marwick, A. E. and d. boyd (2011). "I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience." *New Media & Society* **13**(1): 114-133.

**Discussion Question(s):** A number of writers have noted the emergence (or reemergence) of sharing economies. What kinds of media do people most often share? Why do they share? Digital media are what economists call “public goods.” They can be consumed without diminishing the supply for others. How does the public good nature of digital media affect the media environment?

### **Nov 3            Metrics: Market Information**

Webster Chapter 4 (Media Measures)

Anand, N. and R. A. Peterson (2000). "When Market Information Constitutes Fields: Sensemaking of Markets in the Commercial Music Industry." *Organization Science* **11**(3): 270-284.

Napoli, Philip M., (August, 2013). “Social TV Engagement Metrics: An Exploratory Comparative Analysis of Competing (Aspiring) Market Information Regimes.” Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication Washington, DC.

Couldry, N. and J. Turow (2014). "Big Data, Big Questions| Advertising, Big Data and the Clearance of the Public Realm: Marketers' New Approaches to the Content Subsidy." *International Journal of Communication* **8**: 17.

**Discussion Question(s):** The digital media environment is filled with metrics. What’s the best “currency” for media? Can you think of examples of how “politics” have affected the kinds of metrics that are used in media industries? Do these metrics have any larger social consequences?

### **Nov 10           Metrics: User Information**

**View:** [http://www.ted.com/talks/eli\\_pariser\\_beware\\_online\\_filter\\_bubbles](http://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles)

Salganik, M. J., P. S. Dodds and D. J. Watts (2006). "Experimental study of inequality and unpredictability in an artificial cultural market." *Science* **311**(5762): 854.

boyd, d. and K. Crawford (2012). "Critical questions for big data." *Information, Communication & Society* **15**(5): 662-679.

Gillespie, T. (2014). The relevance of algorithms. In T. Gillespie, et al. (eds). *Media technologies: Essays on communication, materiality, and society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Napoli, P. M. (2014). "Automated Media: An Institutional Theory Perspective on Algorithmic Media Production and Consumption." *Communication Theory* **24**(3): 340-360.

**Discussion Question(s):** What does Pariser mean by the term “filter bubble?” In your own experience, can you think of an example of encountering a filter bubble? Are Big Data and the algorithms that feed of them a good thing? A bad thing? What are the social consequences of our increasing reliance on algorithms?

**Nov 17          Audience Formations**

Webster Chapter 5 (Audience Formations)

Anderson, C. (2004, December) “The Long Tail.” In *Change This* (updated from the original in *Wired*).

Elberse, A. (2008). "Should you invest in the long tail?" *Harvard Business Review* **86**(7/8): 88-96.

Hindman, Matthew and Rogers, Bruce. (2010). “The Dynamics of Web Traffic.” Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1697382> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1697382>

Gentzkow, M. and J. M. Shapiro (2011). "Ideological Segregation Online and Offline." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* **126**(4): 1799-1839.

**Discussion Question(s):** What factors contribute to something’s popularity? What does popularity tell us about a media offering? What factors contribute to audience loyalties?

**Nov 24          The Marketplace of Attention**

Webster Chapter 6 & 7 (Constructing the Marketplace & The Marketplace of Ideas)

**Discussion Question(s):** Where do our preferences come from? Can you trace the origin of some of your newly-minted preferences (e.g., for bands; TV programs; personalities; causes)? Where do you get your news? How will the 21st century marketplace of ideas operate? Will there be a common cultural forum? Will we have serendipitous encounters? Will we encounter noxious ideas?

**Dec 1          Presentations**

**Papers Due Dec 8**

### ***Students with Disabilities***

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For more information, visit the SSD website at <http://www.northwestern.edu/disability>.

### ***Academic Integrity at Northwestern***

Students are expected to comply with University regulations regarding academic integrity. If you are in doubt about what constitutes academic dishonesty, speak to the instructor before the assignment is due and/or examine the University web site. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating on an exam (e.g., copying others' answers, providing information to others, using a crib sheet) or plagiarism of a paper (e.g., taking material from readings without citation, copying another student's paper). Failure to maintain academic integrity on an assignment will result in a loss of credit for that assignment—at a minimum. Other penalties may also apply, including academic suspension. The guidelines for determining academic dishonesty and procedures followed in a suspected incident of academic dishonesty are detailed on the website.

For more information, visit:

[http://www.communication.northwestern.edu/programs/undergraduate/policies\\_procedures/academic\\_integrity/](http://www.communication.northwestern.edu/programs/undergraduate/policies_procedures/academic_integrity/)

### ***Sexual Harassment Policy***

It is the policy of Northwestern University that no male or female member of the Northwestern community—students, faculty, administrators, or staff—may sexually harass any other member of the community. Sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute harassment when:

- submission to such conduct is made or threatened to be made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of an individual's employment or education; or
- submission to or rejection of such conduct is used or threatened to be used as the basis for academic or employment decisions affecting that individual; or
- such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's academic or professional performance or creating what a reasonable person would sense as an intimidating, hostile, or offensive employment, educational, or living environment.

For more information, visit: <http://www.northwestern.edu/sexual-harassment/policy/index.html>