Annotated Bibliography: Media and Youth Political Engagement

compiled and annotated by

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LIS 515: Media Literacy for Youth
Spring 2013
The focus of this bibliography is youth political engagement via social and participatory media. There is a slight distinction made in some of the works cited between political engagement and civic engagement. Political engagement refers to the engagement with federal, state, or some other form of higher governmental affairs, whether that engagement is through voting or simply voicing an opinion about current or proposed laws and policies. Civic engagement refers to close to home politic, often city politics or even community politics, such as the politics in an online community. I have focused primarily on the U.S. perspective, but several resources broaden the scope to include Europe and beyond. Many of these resources are located in the “Outside the U.S.” section of this bibliography. In addition, the majority of these resources are current, having been produced between 2011 and 2013, with a few dating back to 2007. There are older articles and resources, but since technology changes at a rapid pace, many of those resources are already terribly outdated.

This bibliography is in no way meant to be exhaustive. I have, instead, endeavored to compile a varied list of resources. Thus, I have organized the entries according to resource type, with the exception of the “Outside the U.S.” section. There is a section devoted to articles and studies, many of them case studies, personal research, or analysis of other’s research. There is a section devoted to books, most of which include a variety of different topics. The final section of this bibliography lists a few general resources, namely organizations important to this field of study and a blog compiling teaching resources to use with teenagers.

**Bibliography**

**Studies and Articles**


This article outright challenges whether social media has much if any impact on political engagement or participatory politics, this article argues that social media neither increased participation, nor is very good at informing or motivating users. While the author does note possible advantages of social media in terms of expanding political discourse, he claims that studies have shown social media has no more impact on civic engagement, voter turnout, and so forth, than other forms of media. This article is slightly outdated. Most positive research has occurred during the 2012 campaign season, but in 2013, we have yet to really rule out whether 2012 was an exception.

Focusing on community politics and civic engagement, this article provides a detailed analysis of a New York case study focused on providing media experience and social media tools to facilitate youth participatory political engagement. This particular example features a community-based documentary series created by teens as part of a semester-long project. The final phase of the project included uploading the video to Vimo and creating an online space for discussion and civic engagement. While just one study, this article provides a detailed example of one possible way libraries, schools, or organizations could reasonably facilitate participatory politics.


In this blog entry by esteemed researcher and Professor Henry Jenkins, he summarizes and analyzes a recent report on media and participatory politics conducted by Joe Kahne and Cathy Cohen. This research is still in progress. Jenkins helps the reader sift through the important details of this evolving field of research and this particular study, including links to the study, to an interview with the authors, to related information, and even to a video discussion about the research. His article gives extensive context for anyone new to this field of study, while remaining very accessible.


Presented in a call-to-arms fashion, this article introduces the concept of participatory politics and the potential role social media could play in promoting this form of political engagement. The article cites specific cases of teens mobilizing teens via social media, but outlines the numerous challenges hampering the success of utilizing social media for participatory politics, such as the digital divide, lack of awareness, and misinformation. This study may be particularly useful to educators looking to incorporate participatory politics into their lessons, since the author concludes with a few example programs and websites to encourage reader participation.


Kann and his peers examine the interconnection between “participatory culture, political consumerism, and civic engagement” as it relates to the internet and particularly to social media. While they are encouraged by the possibilities, they caution that online politics is not the same as engaging in real-world politics and that measures need to be taken to
transcend the virtual space. While not a case study or in-depth research article, this document could provide a more scholarly introduction to the topics, without being so complex as to confuse laymen.


This article summarizes the findings of a University of California study published in Nature magazine, on the possible effects of an election day “I voted” messages circulated on Facebook during the 2012 election. The article provides a link to the study, outlines the scientific method used, reports the findings, and notes weaknesses, such as the inability to determine the impact on voters from different parties, since so few Facebook users state their party affiliation. While the scope of this research is limited to one election, this study focuses on a specific example of social media and political participation.


This news story provides a short analysis of the YPP 2012 study Participatory Politics: New Media and Youth Political Action, focusing on the possible impact of social media and participatory politics on young African Americans. The article heralds social media as giving young people, and especially African American youths a political voice that they might otherwise not have, but also cautions about the possibility of misinformation and the lack of actual influence. While limited to one ethnicity, this article and the embedded, linked study may still be of interest to anyone seeking information about social media, politics, and minority impact.

Books


A compilation of studies from around the world, including industrialized nations and developing countries, this book focuses on the advantages of mobile devices for promoting civic engagement. The editors argue that websites, social sites, applications and so forth have potential for increasing participation and civic engagement, but making some programs compatible with more accessible and more affordable devices is what will truly empower the next generation. This is one of the few resources that focuses primarily on mobile devices, especially phones, but only the final section focuses specifically on participatory politics, since a variety of civic activities are presented.

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This book covers a wide range of social media topics from group dynamics, to governmental politics, and youth political behaviors. The articles in the second half are particularly appropriate for anyone studying social media and participatory politics, including topics such as online community building, connections between social media use and voter turnout, and studies comparing the effectiveness of e-politicking versus offline politicking. This book also contains a chapter about the impact of e-campaigns and broadcasting debates via the internet in a more interactive format. This resource provides a lot of different avenues for study.


This book attempts to counteract the assumptions that young adults are becoming less and less politically engaged, suggesting that we need to consider forms of engagement other than voter turnout, and develop new ways of actively engaging young people within democratic societies around the world, including teaching participatory politics through social media. The book is composed of articles from a variety of researchers and presents somewhat of a world perspective, with a focus on the West.


Montgomery’s book focuses on the young audience in general, both voting age and below. Much of the book is more of a history of the evolution of technology use by children and teens, but several chapters discuss topics such as interactive classrooms, marketing and campaigns, and “peer-to-peer politics,” discussing the advantages and disadvantages of such technology and the importance of engaging children early on. The book is less scholarly than many sources with about a 50/50 split between research and personal observation, but it may be a helpful source for the laymen looking to learn more about this phenomena.


This collection of articles not only touches on the effects of social media sources like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and so forth on political engagement, but intertwines these issues with traditional forms of media consumption, especially news sources. Some of these news sources have also taken to the web in a semi-social fashion, including comments sections and social site links. This collection looks at the political media environment and gives a good overview of both the news side of things, including the effects on consumers.
Outside the U.S.


This workshop report lists a number of articles and studies from around the world, all focusing on youths, technology, and political engagement. Each citation includes a link to the research article and an accompanying excerpt from the article. Topics range from search engines and the digital divide to social media, phones, and the “semantic web”. While not extensive by any means, this assortment of documents gives an idea of the social media and political situation from a variety of foreign countries, especially third-world countries.


This document from The National Youth Agency and Local Government Group compiles a series of case studies conducted in Britain. While many of these studies are about youth and participatory politics in general, some of the cases studied showcase specific media strategies such as social site pages, role playing games, and text voting. Aside from giving a European media context, the report also showcases some of the current participatory politics programs in place in Britain, such as the Youth Parliament and local, youth-orchestrated, civic organizations.


This short page gives a brief description of the United Nation’s (U.N.) Focal Point on Youth program initiated as a means of allowing young people to have a direct impact on the 2013 World Youth Report. The page also includes links to extra information about the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), the civil society interface that is in charge of the Focal Point. There are additional links to general information about the U.N., agencies, and issues, plus a direct link to the Focal Point Youth program, which is run through Google.

Online General Resources

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This New York Times blog is essentially a bibliography of links to resources for teaching students about politics and the election process. Links lead to various games, quizzes, and other social site tie-ins, twitter sites, and more. Some are outdated, having been created for the 2012 election, but many are continuously updated. Teachers, parents, home educators, and other people who work with children and teens may find these resources helpful in planning educational activities during the election season. Some of the games and social sites may even interest curious teens, working on their own to learn more about politics.


A leading research organization from Tufts University, CIRCLE’s studied focus on “civic education in schools, colleges, and community settings and on young Americans’ voting and political participation, service, activism, media use” is cited in the CIRCLE Mission Statement. The site contains a variety of studies, graphs, quick facts, and even a “Group Membership and Social Networks” page. This is a great resource for specific facts and breakdowns by age, gender, and race. The website is also relatively easy to search using keywords. I located an article titled “CIRCLE’s Social Media Experiments” http://www.civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/v7.i3.3.pdf by typing “social media and political engagement” into the search bar.


The YPP, an organization dedicated to studying the connection between media and political involvement among the youth population, actively promotes greater access to media, especially social media and internet resources. The YPP website includes links to their organization’s research under the “Publications” tab, links to resources and articles unaffiliated with YPP under the “Press” tab, and links to ongoing projects and upcoming events under the “Projects” and “Events” tabs. The website also includes links to their Twitter and Newsletter, to help you keep up-to-date on all the latest news regarding media and political engagement among young people.

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