



**UK PSA Media and Politics Group  
Newsletter  
Honorary President: Professor Mick Temple**

**What we do**

The Group was set up to act as a forum for discussion between a wide variety of academics with interests in the study of media policy, journalism, political communications, new information technologies and other topics. Though a specialist group of the Political Studies Association (PSA), we encourage those working in other disciplines to join and get involved. To this end we organise panels at the PSA Annual Conference and a short themed conference in the autumn.

Website: <https://www.psa.ac.uk/specialist-groups/media-and-politics>

Newsletter items to:

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**Events**

**PSA Media and Politics Group Virtual Panel Series 2021**

Thanks to those of you who joined our previous online sessions! The recordings are available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXkiNzCFpdSWcF1JtXSDqRw>

We're pleased to announce that registration is now open for our fourth seminar taking place in October:

**Overcoming the Crises and Reversing the Crisis of Political Communication: Towards a More Three-Dimensional Model with Darren Lilleker.**

**Date: Wednesday, 13 October 2021**

**Time: 4pm-5pm UK (BST)**

Please register (for free) via Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/psa-mpg-seminar-series-4-professor-darren-lilleker-tickets-177001304667>

**Location: Online – link will be sent out once you have registered.**

Crisis is a term that is perhaps overused, however it seems we live now in a time of permanent crisis. The pandemic, meat and gas shortages, and increases in the cost of living are likely to have significant impacts over coming months. Our politics appears locked into a mode of communication involving simplistic messaging and emotional manipulation with media offering ideologically-driven blaring headlines hectoring parties of the opposite political colour. This highlights the challenges Jay Blumler identified as symptomatic of the worsening of the crisis of public communication.

I argue from a normative standpoint that political communication and those who communicate politics need to adopt a different mindset. How I believe politics should be communicated centres around three principles. Firstly, at its heart politics needs to adopt a service ethos. Political leaders need to demonstrate their policies are driven by morality, authenticity and understanding and policies need to benefit all. This leads to the second principle, inclusivity. All citizens must feel politics works for them and that they have a role in civil society, they must also feel they are being appropriately informed about their responsibilities and how they are enabled to play their role in society to the best of their abilities. Thirdly, political communication requires an injection of empathy, no faux understanding of the general will but a true understanding of the struggles ordinary women and men face.

Currently we find political communication not only lacks these principles at its heart but that as practiced it is moving further from these principles. Hence we find increasing levels of mistrust, apathy and support for populist positions that pit ordinary people against the elite and target 'others' within society. The talk, based on a global review of government's communication during the pandemic and a conceptual chapter to be published in the IGI volume 'Contemporary Politics, Communication, and the Impact on Democracy', we hope to be a conversation starter on how these principles can be implemented.

**More seminars coming soon...**

**Social Movements in Elections: UK Anti-Austerity and Environmental Campaigning 2015-19 with Abi Rhodes**

**Date: Wednesday, 17 November 2021**

**Time: 4pm-5pm UK (BST)**

**Registration will open after our next seminar! Stay tuned for the link.**

The talk will be based on Abi's book which examines the on and offline communicative tactics of Extinction Rebellion and The People's Assembly Against Austerity in the 2015, 17 and 19 elections and concomitant media coverage and manifesto pledges around the issues of austerity and the environment. It establishes the role of movement-voter interaction in elections as extended political consultation that seeks to persuade more citizens to participate in the electoral process and put pressure on the prospective government over which policies to adopt.

### **PSA Media and Politics Annual Conference**

We're looking forward to our annual conference taking place 15-16<sup>th</sup> December 2021 completely online, organised and hosted by Ruth Sanz Sabido and colleagues at Canterbury Christ Church University. The call for submissions has now passed, so if your paper has been accepted, don't forget to register by 8<sup>th</sup> November! Registration is also open to other members as well if you fancy joining us.

The link to register for the PSA Media and Politics Group Conference is now available:

<https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/events/PSA-Media-and-Politics-Conference.aspx>

£20 conference registration fee for both PSA members and non-members

£10 for students/precariously employed

### **Publications**

#### **When the Nerds Go Marching In. How Digital Technology Moved from the Margins to the Mainstream of Political Campaigns by Rachel Gibson**

Digital technology has moved from the margins to the mainstream of campaign and election organization in contemporary democracies. Previously considered a mere novelty item, technology has become a basic necessity for any candidate or party contemplating a run for political office. While it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when the first digital campaign was officially launched, the general consensus is that the breakthrough moment, at least in terms of public awareness, came during the 1992 U.S. election cycle. At the presidential level, it was Democratic nominee Bill Clinton who laid claim to this virtual terra nova after his staff uploaded a series of basic text files with biographical information for voters to browse. Since that time, use of the internet in elections has expanded dramatically in the U.S. and elsewhere.

When the Nerds Go Marching In examines the increasing role and centrality of the internet within election campaigns across established democracies since the 1990s. Combining an extensive review of existing literature and comparative data sources with original survey evidence and web content analysis of digital campaign content across four nations—the UK, Australia, France, and the U.S.—the book maps the key shifts in the role and centrality of the internet in election campaigns over a twenty year period.

Specifically, Gibson sets out the case for four phases of development in digital campaigns, from early amateur experimentation and standardization, to more strategic mobilization of activists and voters. In addition to charting the way these developments changed external interactions with citizens, Gibson details how this evolution is transforming the internal structure of political campaigns. Despite some early signs that the internet would lead to the devolution of power to members and supporters, more recent developments have seen the emergence of a new digitally literate cohort of data analysts and software engineers in campaign organizations. This group exercises increasing influence over key decision-making tasks. Given the resource implications of this new "data-driven" mode of digital campaigning, the book asserts that smaller political players face an even greater challenge to compete with their bigger rivals. Based on her findings, Gibson also speculates on the future direction for political campaigns as they increasingly rely on digital tools and artificial intelligence for direction and decision-making during elections.

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/when-the-nerds-go-marching-in-9780195397796?cc=gb&lang=en&>

### **Social Movements in Elections: UK Anti-Austerity and Environmental Campaigning 2015-19 by Abi Rhodes**

This book focuses on the interrelatedness of social movements and elections and develops the theoretical dimension of movement-voter interaction. It posits that social movements engage in communicative tactics during elections to highlight specific issues and to convey ideas, values and beliefs to the voter. Applying methodological tools from political discourse analysis, the book considers the breadth of on- and offline tactics employed by the UK movement groups The People's Assembly Against Austerity and Extinction Rebellion in the 2015, 2017 and 2019 general elections. The book argues the case for social movement-voter interaction as a key aspect of social movement and political communication research.

<https://www.palgrave.com/gb/book/9783030762049>

### **Outside the Bubble. Social Media and Political Participation in Western Democracies by Cristian Vaccari and Augusto Valeriani**

Much time has been spent over the past decade debating whether social media contribute to democracy. Drawing on an original study of internet users across nine Western democracies, *Outside the Bubble* offers an unprecedented look at the effects of social media on democratic participation.

This book argues that social media do indeed increase political participation in both online and face-to-face activities—and that they expand political equality across Western democracies. In fact, Cristian Vaccari and Augusto Valeriani find that, for the most part, social media do not constitute echo chambers or filter bubbles as most users see a mixture of political content they agree and disagree with. Various political experiences on social media have positive implications for participation and active political involvement: social media allow citizens to encounter clearly identifiable political viewpoints, facilitate accidental exposure to political news, and enable political actors and ordinary citizens to reach voters with electoral messages designed to mobilize them. Moreover, political interactions occurring on social media do not only benefit citizens who are already involved, but boost participation across the board. This is because social media offer both additional participatory incentives to the already engaged and new political opportunities for the less engaged.

By adopting a comparative approach, Vaccari and Valeriani also show that political institutions matter since some political experiences on social media are more strongly associated with participation in majoritarian systems and in party-centric systems. While social media may contribute to many societal problems, they can help address at least two important democratic ills: citizens' apathy towards politics, and inequalities between those who choose to exercise their voice and those who remain silent.

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/outside-the-bubble-9780190858483?cc=gb&lang=en&#>

### **Women, Media, and Elections: Representation and Marginalization in British Politics by Emily Harmer**

In the century since women were first eligible to stand and vote in British general elections, they have relied on news media to represent their political perspectives in the public realm.

This book provides a systematic analysis of electoral coverage by charting how women candidates, voters, politicians' spouses, and party leaders have been portrayed in newspapers since 1918.

The result is a fascinating account of both continuity and change in the position of women in British politics. The book demonstrates that for women to be effectively represented in the

political domain, they must also be effectively represented in the public discussion of politics that takes place in the media.

<https://bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/women-media-and-elections>