



PPP 185:

Internet Design for Democracy

Fall 2001 - 1 credit



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Class: Mondays and Wednesdays 11.40-1.00 Location: Land Hall, Belfer Building

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Class homepage:<http://ksghome.harvard.edu/~pnorris.shorenstein.ksg/PPP185Home.htm>

Aims:

- I. To understand the rise of the Information Society and the problems of the 'democratic divide';
 - II. To analyze effective use of Internet communication strategies in meeting organizational objectives;
 - III. To learn effective techniques for evaluating Internet communication strategies and Web designs, including content analysis, focus groups, online surveys and experiments;
 - IV. To learn web page editing and design, and;
 - V. To apply these lessons in a strategic plan for your project client.
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Synopsis:

This class is designed for those who will be engaged in using new technology for communications in diverse career paths, whether employed as information and press officers, communication consultants, journalists and broadcasters, public sector managers, or as policy analysts working in the public and non-profit sector. Your careers may be working for candidates and parties, NGOs and new social movements, the news media, parliaments or government departments, or you may plan to launch your own dot.org.

The course will focus on the problem of the democratic divide, and the practical steps and applied techniques that can be used to maximize the democratic potential of the new technology. For enthusiasts, the Internet promises to provide new forms of horizontal and vertical communication that will enrich engagement, deliberation and democracy in the public sphere. But will Internet resources be open to everyone? The central issue generating widespread concern in the emergent Information Age has been indications of a growing 'digital divide' between Internet-haves and have-nots. A *global* divide has become strikingly evident in the chasm between industrialized and developing societies. A *social* divide is apparent in the access of rich and poor in each nation, as well as by generation, race and gender. And within the online community, a *democratic* divide is emerging between those who do, and do not, use Internet resources to engage, mobilize, and participate in public life.

This courses focuses on understanding these issues and what can be done in practice via the Net to promote opportunities for effective civic engagement and democratic policymaking. Projects use 'hands on' experience of comparing, analyzing, designing, critically evaluating, and improving political resources on the Internet for a 'client' such as a government department, non-profit organization, or an international agency. The class analyzes case studies illustrating effective strategic communications via new technology with examples drawn from many countries worldwide. Class notes will be posted online and class materials will make extensive use of Internet resources.

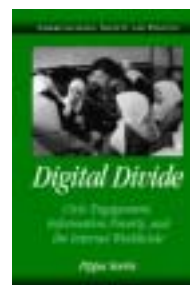
No familiarity with web editing is assumed and instructions on the nuts and bolts of Microsoft FrontPage will be given. Special sessions will be arranged outside of class time in the computer lab for those who have never used FrontPage or its equivalent.

Core Books for Purchase are:

Anthony Wilhelm *Democracy in the Digital Age: Challenges to Political Life in Cyberspace*. New York: Routledge. 2000. 0-415-92436-7. \$22.99

Richard Davis *The Web of Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1999. \$18.95.

Pippa Norris. *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty and the Internet in Democratic Societies*. (New York: Cambridge University Press. Fall 2001). Draft chapters are available [online](http://www.pippanorris.com) at www.pippanorris.com.



Schedule:

Optional Shopping Class Friday September 10th 11.40-1.00 Location: Land Hall
Mondays and Wednesdays 11.40-1.00 Location: Land Hall

	Mon & Wed
I. Mapping the Cyber-Community	
1. Introduction: The Rise of the Information Society	12 Sept
2. The Global Divide: Who's Online Worldwide?	24 & 26 Sept
3. The Social Divide: Who's Online?	1 & 3 Oct A#1
II. Designing Effective Strategies: Meeting Organizational Objectives	
4. Parties and Election Campaigns	10 Oct
5. Civic Society: NGOs, New Social Movements & the News Media	15 & 17 Oct A#2
6. Online Legislatures	22 & 24 Oct
7. Online Governance	29 & 31 Oct
8. Online Civic Engagement	5 & 7 Nov A#3
III. Data Mining and Evaluation: Learning What Works	
9. Designing Web Sites and Content Analysis	12 & 14 Nov
10 Designing and Implementing Web Feedback and Surveys	19 & 21 Nov
11 Designing and Implementing Focus Groups & Experiments	26 & 28 Nov
IV. Implementing Strategic Plans	
12. Putting it all together into a strategic plan	3 & 5 Dec
13. Presentation of your strategic plans	10 & 12 Dec
14. Course Evaluation & Closing Lunch	17 Dec A#4

Front Page:

There will be essential two-hour lab sessions for groups to learn Front Page 2000 web editing at the following times:

- Group A: Thursday 18th Oct 3-5
- Group B: Friday 19th Oct 3-5
- Group C: Tuesday 23rd Oct 12-2
- Group D: Wednesday 24th Oct 4-6.

You need to join *one* of these groups. In addition, on the week from 29th October to 2nd November the lab will be available every afternoon 4-6 for additional sign up sessions to work on your web editing skills. This work will be given class credit in Assignment #3 due in 7th November. The computer lab is on the ground floor, Taubman Building, Kennedy School.




Visiting Speakers & Events

Details will be confirmed closer to the events.

PPP185 Weekly Readings:

(M=Monday) (W=Wednesday)






Week 1: Understanding the Rise of the Information Society

-  Pippa Norris *Digital Divide* Chapter 1 & 2 (W)
-  Anthony Wilhelm *Democracy in the Digital Age* Chapter 1 (W)
-  Richard Davis *The Web of Politics* Chapters 1 (W)

Discussion questions:

1. Which view do you most agree with: 'cyberoptimists', 'cyberskeptics', and 'cyber-pessimists'?
2. What are the problems of evaluating the evidence that would help us evaluate these views?
3. What are the policy implications of these views?





Week 2: The Global Digital Divide: Who's Online Worldwide?

-  Pippa Norris *Digital Divide* Chapter 3 (M)
-  OECD *Understanding the Digital Divide*. 2001.
http://www.oecd.org/dsti/sti/prod/Digital_divide.pdf (M)
-  Internet Society (ISOC) "Internet and Emerging Nations." Special Issue of *On the Internet*
<http://www.isoc.org/oti/> (W). Pick the articles that most interest you.(M)
-  Francisco Rodriguez and Ernest Wilson III. May 2000. 'Are Poor Countries Losing the Information Revolution?' WorldBank InfoDev
<http://www.infodev.org/library/wilsonrodriguez.doc> and [tables](#) (W)
-  International Telecommunications Union. *Internet Case Studies*. (W)
<http://www.itu.int/ti/casestudies/index.htm> Pick the country that most interests you.

Discussion questions:

1. Which countries are the main leaders and laggards in the diffusion of the Information Society?
2. What best explains these patterns: cultural, economic or political factors?
3. What is the future of the global digital divide, a temporary phenomenon or a lasting North-South inequality?

Week 3: The Social Divide




-  Pippa Norris *Digital Divide* Chapter 4 (M)
-  Anthony Wilhelm *Democracy in the Digital Age* Chapter 3 & 4(M)
-  Department of Commerce. 2000. *Falling Through the Net*.
<http://www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiahome/fttn00/contents00.html> (W)
-  Closing the Digital Divide. <http://www.digitaldivide.gov/> (W)

Discussion questions:

1. What are the main social divisions in access to the Internet, and in particular is race or class a more important source of inequality in the United States?
2. How far are social inequalities in online access reflected in patterns of online usage?

3. What are the most effective policy options for reducing the social divide in access, and what is the role of the state and markets in this process?





Week 4: Parties and Election Campaigns (No class Monday)

-  Pippa Norris *Digital Divide* Chapter 6 (W)
-  Pippa Norris *A Virtuous Circle* Chapter 7 & 8 (W)
-  Richard Davis *The Web of Politics* Chapters 4 (W)

Discussion questions:

1. How are parties adapting to the online world, and in particular are parties providing 'top-down' forms of publicity or also 'bottom-up' forms of interactivity and political participation?
2. Is there evidence that the Internet is being used effectively in election campaigns to supplement or replace traditional forms of political communication? Give examples of these types of activities.
3. Do election campaigns reflect 'politics as usual'?

Week 5: Civic Society & News Media

-  Pippa Norris *Digital Divide* Chapter 7 (M)
-  Anthony Wilhelm *Democracy in the Digital Age* Chapter 5 (M)
-  Richard Davis *The Web of Politics* Chapters 2 & 3 (W)
-  Leonard Sussman Introduction 'The Internet in Flux'.
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/pfs2001/pfs2001.pdf> (W)

Discussion questions:

1. The news media are one of the most popular sites among the public but are they 'giving away the shop' and is there a financial model allowing online newspapers to generate revenue?
2. How serious are the problems of Internet censorship, and what is the 'dictator's dilemma'?
3. How far has the Internet contributed towards transnational policy networks and new social movements exemplified by Seattle, Gothenberg and Genoa? How can this best be examined and studied?

Week 6: Legislatures (No class Wednesday)

-  Pippa Norris *Digital Divide* Chapter 5 (M)
-  Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2000. *Web Sites of National Parliaments. 'Guidelines for the Content and Structure of Parliamentary Web Sites.'* www.ipu.org/english/parlweb.htm (M)

Discussion questions:

1. What are then most appropriate criteria to evaluate effective and well-designed parliamentary websites? Give examples of good and bad design and the reasons for your selection.
2. How do we best explain the distribution of effective legislative websites around the globe?

3. How far should parliamentary websites be designed as public forums to encourage citizen participation and deliberation?

Week 7: Governance

- Pippa Norris *Digital Divide* Chapter 5 (M)
- Richard Davis *The Web of Politics* Chapter 5 (M)
- K School Case Study: *www.business.gov: Building an Interagency Web Site*.
<http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/case/advisor/usba/index.html> (W) [Login name duncan p/w ginger]
- Case Study: The Hansard Society Online Consultation Projects. See <http://www.hansard-society.org.uk/eDemocracy.htm> (W)

Discussion questions:

1. Have government departments been relatively conservative in adapting to the Internet and what are the major barriers to further change?
2. Is there a role for the Internet in terms of public consultation and what are the dangers and advantages of this process?

Week 8: Civic Engagement

- Pippa Norris *Digital Divide* Chapter 8 & 9 (M)
- Pippa Norris *A Virtuous Circle* Chapter 12 & 14 (M)
- Richard Davis *The Web of Politics* Chapter 6 (M)
- Richard Davis *The Web of Politics* Chapter 7 (W)
- Steve Cisler. 1999. 'Showdown in Seattle: Turtles, Teamsters and Tear Gas'. *First Monday*. Vol 4(12) http://www.firstmonday.dk/issues/issue4_12/cisler/index.html (W)

Discussion questions:

1. If you build an effective political website, will they come? What do we know about the pattern of online users to party, news and governmental websites in terms of their background and attitudes?
2. Can political websites hope to engage the disengaged? Why or why not?
3. Is political participation and civic engagement in decline or experiencing a process of transformation?

Week 9: Designing Web Sites and Content Analysis

We will draw on various sources this week: read the ones that you find most useful.

- Teresa A. Martin and Glenn Davis *The Project Cool Guide to Enhancing Your Web Site* New York: John Wiley, URL: <http://www.projectcool.com>
- Steve O'Keefe. *Internet Publicity Resources*. New York: John Wiley. How could a book on internet publicity not be on the web? <http://www.wiley.com/compbooks/okeefe/>
- Patrick Lynch [Web Style Guide: Basic Design Principles](#). Check also other books listed on his linked home page. URL: <http://info.med.yale.edu/caim/manual/>
- David Sigel [Creating Killer Web Sites](#). Great example sites and useful guide to design tools. URL: <http://www.killersites.com/core.html>

Discussion questions:

1. What are the main criteria you would advocate in evaluating a government website, and why would you prioritize these criteria?
2. What are the most common failings of web design from the point of view of (a) the political agency (b) the public user?

Week 10: Designing Web Feedback and Surveys

Robert Buchanan and Charles Lukaszewski. *Measuring the Impact of your Web Site*. New York: John Wiley, 1997. Implementing systems for quantifying such essentials as site traffic, customer behavior and site productivity. Case studies range from Federal Express through the US Senate and the Star Tribune. URL: <http://www.siteimpact.com> (M)

The Pew Research Center on the People & the Press. [Pew Internet and American Life](http://www.pewinternet.org/index.asp). This site has regular surveys of Internet use in the US. URL: <http://www.pewinternet.org/index.asp>

Discussion questions:

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of alternative ways of measuring and monitoring the impact of websites?
2. What are the most common difficulties in measuring Internet use effectively via conventional face-to-face or telephone surveys?

Week 11: Designing Focus Groups & Experiments

Brenda Killingsworth et al. 2000. 'The Use of Focus Groups in the Design of a National Labor Exchange.' *First Monday* http://www.firstmonday.dk/issues/issue5_7/killingsworth/index.html (M)

Discussion questions:

1. How can focus groups be used effectively in the early stages of design and re-design to improve the usability of websites?
2. What are the major problems of focus group analysis?

Week 12: Presentation of Strategic Plans

Week 13: Presentation of Strategic Plans

Week 14: Course evaluation and closing lunch



Note: The discussion questions are designed to focus your reading and prepare you for class. Use of other resources is highly recommended and full details are available on the class website.

PPP185 Assignments:

The following are the assignments for this class. Written work should be handed in after class discussion on the due date.

#1 Policy Analysis Paper: Four-sided single-spaced paper for discussion **Wednesday 3rd October** (Grade max: 20 points)

You have been asked to act as a consultant for UNESCO comparing the differences in the diffusion of the Internet in countries in one major region of the world (eg Latin America, Western Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa etc.).

Write a four page bulleted memo:

- (i) Explaining the differences between countries in your region of choice,
- (ii) Demonstrating the major factors which in your view have contributed to these differences,
- (iii) Outlining three major policy recommendations about what UNESCO should do to widen Internet access in your region and say why you believe these would work.

Based on your reading, from recommended references and other sources, be prepared to justify the factors you select as important. Use tables, graphs, scatterplots or regression analysis to demonstrate your evidence. An Excel database is available online for downloading with information from 179 nations. The sites listed under [resources - statistics](#) give you some background information that might prove helpful for your data analysis.

#2 Website Evaluation Memo: Two-sided memo for discussion **Wednesday 17th October** (Grade max: 10 points)

You have been asked to act as a consultant to compare, review and evaluate the web sites on one policy area (eg the environment, human rights, world trade, conflict resolution, women's rights) developed for any two interest groups, new social movements, or NGOs. Sites can be found using any search engine or the following resources:

-  [Political Resources on the Net](http://www.politicalresources.net/) <http://www.politicalresources.net/>
-  [Interweb New Social Movements](http://www.interweb-tech.com/nsmnet/resources/default.asp) <http://www.interweb-tech.com/nsmnet/resources/default.asp>
-  [Protest Net](http://www.protest.net/) <http://www.protest.net/>
-  [Grassroots.com](http://www.grassroots.com/) <http://www.grassroots.com/>
-  [Union of International Associations](http://www.uia.org/) <http://www.uia.org/>

Pick two sites in your policy area that you think exemplify the best practice and most effective design and two sites that you think exemplify the worst. In your memo *explain the criteria you used to make your evaluations* with examples, and be prepared to defend your argument in the class discussions. *See the readings to help choose your criteria.*

#3 Website Design: 4-8 page website for completion **Wednesday 7th November**. (Grade max 30 points)

Working in pairs, building on the previous exercise, pick as your client *one of the worst* websites that you have evaluated and:

1. Consider and plan how you would improve the strategic objectives;
2. Consider and plan how you would improve the website design;
3. Create a mock-up 4-8 page website that you could present to your client for relaunch.

Note: You will need to attend one of the two-hour training sessions in Front Page if you have no familiarity with this package in order to complete this exercise. See the schedule page for details. In addition, on the week from 29th October to 2nd November the computer lab will be available every afternoon 4-6 for additional sign up sessions to work on your web editing skills.

#4 Group Project: Group discussion **Wednesday 21st November** (Group class discussion for the launch of project work. Group projects will be presented in weeks 12 and 13 and handed in week 14 on Monday 17th December. Grade max: **worth 30 points.**)

Your group has been asked to act as consultants for one of the following organizations. The client wants to evaluate their web site with a view to relaunching and redesigning it within the next six months. Working as a group you are asked to produce a report which:

- (i) Summarizes the aims, objectives, contents and design of the current web site;
- (ii) Systematically compares the contents and design of the web site with three others by similar organizations;
- (ii) Designs ways to evaluate how far the web site is achieving its aims and objectives including proposing surveys, or focus groups, or experiments or other research to monitor who uses the web site and its effectiveness for users;
- (iv) Proposes a strategic communication plan with three options for relaunching the web site including outlining the aims and objectives, the core design, features, and contents, along with an indication of the costs and schedule for each option.

Groups will be based around one of the following possible clients:

- State Government: [Commonwealth of Massachusetts](http://www.state.ma.us/) <http://www.state.ma.us/>
- Parliament: [The UK Parliament](http://www.parliament.uk/) <http://www.parliament.uk/>
- International Non-Profit Agency: [IDEA International](http://www.IDEA.int) <http://www.IDEA.int>
- US Non-profit: [Project Vote Smart](http://www.vote-smart.org/) <http://www.vote-smart.org/>
- NGO: [Greenpeace](http://www.greenpeace.org) <http://www.greenpeace.org>
- News Media: [The Boston Globe](http://www.boston.com/) <http://www.boston.com/>

The project is to be handed in by the deadline of the last day of class on **17th December** with a group mark for the whole project.

Overall class participation: (Grade max: 10 points)

