EVENTS CALENDAR

Citizenship Speaker Series

LANCE BENNETT

“The Logic of Connective Action: Public Engagement in the Digital Age”

Monday, April 07, 2014, 3:30PM - 5:00PM

The Mershon Center for International Security Studies
150 Neil Ave. Columbus, OH 43220

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Lance Bennett is Ruddick C. Lawrence Professor of Communication and professor of political science at University of Washington-Seattle, where he is director of the Center for Communication and Civic Engagement. The center is dedicated to understanding how communication processes and technologies can enhance citizen engagement with social life, politics, and global affairs.

Bennett has published and lectured widely on media and information systems in civic life. His research areas include theories of citizenship and civic life; press-government relations; communication and the organization of national and transnational advocacy; the rise of the networked society; and how digital media are changing the public sphere.

He has received the Ulrich de Sola Pool Lectureship and the Murray Edelman Distinguished Career Award from the American Political Science Association; Doctor of Philosophy, honoris causa, from Upsala University; the Ofol Palmé Visiting Professorship in Sweden; and a National Communication Association Distinguished Scholar career award. His most recent book is The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics, with Alexandra Seegerberg (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Abstract

This presentation will explain the rise of personalized, large-scale publics in which diverse populations address the common problems of our times such as economic fairness and climate change. These episodes of mass engagement often entail diminished or modified roles for conventional organizations such as parties, NGOs, or movement groups that orchestrated most of political life in the 20th century. In some cases, formal brick and mortar organizations are almost absent, as in digitally mediated crowds such as Occupy Wall Street, in which dispersed local camps were coordinated through numerous technology platforms that enabled the flow of inclusive discourses such as “We Are the 99%.”

In such mobilizations, communication operates as an organizational process that may replace or supplement familiar forms of collective action based on organizational resource mobilization, leadership, and collective action framing. A second notable type of connective action in today’s public engagement picture involves more conventional political organizations such as NGOs, but more in background roles of deploying networking technologies, and personalized communication logics that enable diverse pathways for engagement with various political causes. The talk explores how power is organized in these communication-based networks, how traditional media engage with them, and what political outcomes may result.
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