Social Media and Politics

a discussion with

Lauren Copeland

Assistant Professor of Politics and Citizenship, Baldwin Wallace University, and Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Information Technology & Politics

September 27, 2019 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.
Kelvin Smith Library Dampe Room, 11201 Euclid Ave

Politics is conducted by groups of people, uniting with each other in conflict with or to cooperate with others. Individuals become and act as groups through processes of communication. From the agoras of classical Greece to the newspapers of William Randolph Hearst to Pravda, CNN and Fox News, communication methods have shaped or enabled political behavior.

And now there is "Social Media."

In principle or concept, social media might be comparable to the conversations that people have with each other, in families or other relationships. One key question then would be how increased scale could change the effects of unstructured communication. For instance, are panics and mob reactions more likely, or less? Another would be whether the informal groups created through social media shape attitudes and willingness to become involved in politics: does use of snapchat increase or decrease civic engagement among college students? Are users of political social media more likely to vote?

But, as we have learned recently, social media also may be manipulated with rather more intent. Parties have social media strategies; messages are targeted through data mining; "bots" send messages that are hardly person-to-person and so not exactly "social"; perhaps more positively, some governments have even hoped to use social media for "citizen deliberation."

The uses and abuses of social media therefore are one of the leading edges of current political science. Join us as Professor Copeland discusses questions and findings.

The Friday Public Affairs Discussion Lunch is an opportunity for students, faculty, staff, emeriti and other members of our communities to learn and question each other about public policy issues at the international, national, and local levels. Faculty and other speakers share their research and experience to get beyond the headlines and repetition in the mass media, and the wild rumors of the internet. Lunch is brown bag, but cookies and some beverages are provided by the Center for Policy Studies of the College of Arts and Sciences.

http://fridaylunch.case.edu/