

Interdisciplinary Topics in Economics, Political Science and Development Studies

Instructor: *Andrea Tesei (Queen Mary University of London)*

This mini-course explores how communication technologies and social change reshape political behavior, participation, and identity across both advanced democracies and developing contexts. Drawing on empirical evidence from economics, political science, and development studies, we examine how media and digital platforms influence voting, collective action, and trust in institutions. We then connect these transformations to the rise of communitarian and populist politics, highlighting both their drivers and their broader consequences for democratic resilience.

The course consists of three standalone 2-hour lectures, each combining theoretical framing with causal evidence and comparative case studies.

Lecture 1 — Media, Information, and the Transformation of Politics

This lecture examines how informative, partisan, and entertainment media shape political accountability and persuasion. We compare mechanisms such as agenda-setting, priming, and cognitive exposure, evaluating evidence from both traditional broadcast media and the early digital era.

Learning Objectives

- Understand how media exposure affects voting behavior and political beliefs
- Differentiate between information, persuasion, and entertainment effects
- Analyze empirical strategies for identifying media influence

Core Readings

Snyder, James M., Jr. & David Strömberg. "Press Coverage and Political Accountability." *Journal of Political Economy* (2010)

Della Vigna, Stefano & Ethan Kaplan. "The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2007)

Durante, Ruben; Paolo Pinotti & Andrea Tesei. "The Political Legacy of Entertainment TV." *American Economic Review* (2019)

Optional Readings

Enikolopov, Ruben; Maria Petrova & Ekaterina Zhuravskaya. "Media and Political Persuasion: Evidence from Russia." *American Economic Review* (2011)

McCombs, Maxwell & Donald Shaw. "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media." *Public Opinion Quarterly* (1972)

Iyengar, Shanto & Donald Kinder. *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion*. University of Chicago Press, (1987).

Lecture 2 — The Political Power of Social Media: From Mobilization to Electoral Change

This lecture explores how social media and mobile internet access reshape political participation and electoral outcomes. We study when digital technologies act as tools for coordination and protest, and when they foster anti-establishment or communitarian voting. Attention is given to the tension between empowerment and destabilization.

Learning Objectives

- Analyze social media as both coordination and persuasion technology
- Identify conditions under which online connectivity increases participation or distrust
- Compare mobilization effects (protest) with preference effects (voting)

Core Readings

Manacorda, Marco & Andrea Tesei. "Mobile Phones and Protest in Africa." *Econometrica* (2020)

Guriev, Sergei; Nikita Melnikov & Ekaterina Zhuravskaya. "3G Internet and Confidence in Government." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2021)

Manacorda, Marco; Guido Tabellini & Andrea Tesei. "Mobile Internet and the Rise of Communitarian Politics." *R&R, Review of Economic Studies* (2025)

Optional Readings

Enikolopov, Ruben; Alexey Makarin & Maria Petrova. "Social Media and Protest Participation: Evidence from Russia." *Econometrica* (2020)

Allcott, Hunt; Luca Braghieri; Sarah Eichmeyer & Matthew Gentzkow. "The Welfare Effects of Social Media." *American Economic Review* (2020)

Lecture 3 — Populism, Identity, and the Reordering of Political Cleavages

This lecture investigates the rise of populist and communitarian politics as a response to changes in information flows, economic shocks, and identity dynamics. We study both the drivers of right-wing realignment and its consequences for democratic norms, including feedback effects in countries of origin through social remittances. Immigration is considered as one of several arenas in which identity competition becomes politically salient.

Learning Objectives

- Understand communitarianism vs. universalism as a modern political divide
- Examine how media, economic shifts, and religion interact to fuel populism
- Analyze global consequences through feedback to origin countries

Core Readings

Guriev, Sergei & Elias Papaioannou. "What Drives Populism? Information, Globalization, and Identity." *Journal of Economic Literature* (2022)

Manacorda, Marco; Jacopo Ponticelli & Andrea Tesei. "The International Transmission of Democratic Values: Evidence from African Migration to Europe." (wp 2025)

Colussi, Tommaso; Dominic Rohner; Andrea Tesei & Felipe Valencia. "Pilgrims and Crusaders: How Religion Shapes Political Divides in Europe." (wp 2025)

Optional Readings

Bonomi, Giampaolo; Nicola Gennaioli & Guido Tabellini. "Identity, Beliefs, and Political Conflict." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2021)

Optional Extension (Time Permitting)

A concluding comparative discussion may draw on evidence on ICT and economic outcomes — e.g. Jensen (2007, QJE) or Gupta, Ponticelli & Tesei (2024, RESTAT).

Jensen, Robert. "The Digital Provide: Information (Technology), Market Performance, and Welfare in the South Indian Fisheries Sector." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2007)

Gupta, Apoorv; Jacopo Ponticelli & Andrea Tesei. "Language Barriers, Technology Adoption and Productivity: Evidence from Agriculture in India." *Review of Economics and Statistics* (2024)