

**Russian Propaganda in Domestic and Global Politics**  
**POLS GU 4457 Spring 2024**  
**Tuesdays 12:10-2:00pm, 711 International Affairs Building**

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**OFFICE HOURS:** Thursday 12-2 pm (open space near room 1227, International Affairs Building) or by appointment

### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

Propaganda is a key tool of contemporary authoritarian politics. Autocrats such as Russia's Vladimir Putin, China's Xi Jinping, or Hungary's Viktor Orbán use state-controlled media to manipulate citizens, and some of them extensively rely on propaganda to undermine democracy in other countries. This course encourages students to think about the specific roles that media and propaganda play in autocracies, focusing on Russia in particular. We will read and discuss cutting-edge empirical research in political science and media studies to understand how autocrats such as Putin manipulate public opinion, why their propaganda can be successful, what its limits are, and how we can spot authoritarian propaganda in practice.

In the first part of the course, we will discuss the common strategies of propaganda in authoritarian regimes such as China or Russia: What do autocrats aim to achieve by manipulating the media? What techniques are at their disposal? How do they manipulate the internet and social media? We will examine how Vladimir Putin has used the media to consolidate his rule, and we will discuss the key ideas and narratives of the Kremlin's propaganda. We will also consider how authoritarian propaganda infiltrates Western media and public discussion, paying special attention to the false narratives about Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The second part of the course examines how the public and civil society react to authoritarian propaganda: What media do citizens in authoritarian countries consume and like? How are citizens themselves involved in counteracting or co-producing propaganda? What is the role of independent journalists and political opposition? How vulnerable are citizens in the West and other countries to the Kremlin's false narratives?

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

In this course, students will: (1) examine the social science theories of authoritarian rule and apply these theories to evaluate the strategies of authoritarian propaganda; (2) gain an understanding of the role of media and propaganda in the survival and popularity of contemporary autocrats; (3) learn about the common tactics of the Kremlin's propaganda and the ways to spot them; (4) learn to think critically about the effects of authoritarian propaganda on public opinion, both domestically and on the global scale; (5) practice research skills via systematic analysis of Russian media coverage, propaganda strategies, or other social science topics examined in this course.

## EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

This course is a discussion seminar, and you are expected to come to class having completed all the assigned readings and prepared to discuss these readings thoughtfully and critically. Active participation in class discussions is essential.

I also strongly encourage you to regularly read at least one news outlet with substantial coverage of Russia and international politics, such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, or *The Economist*. Recent developments around Russia will frequently feature in our class discussions, and following these developments during the course will also help you develop your written assignments.

### Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. If you miss any classes due to illness or other emergency, you will need to email me and provide medical or other proof.

### Participation

Active participation in class discussions will be a large part of your final grade. To receive a full grade, you will need to demonstrate engagement with the readings and contribute regularly to the discussion, providing examples, elaborating arguments, and asking thoughtful questions. Useful advice on reading social science research can be found here: Hoover Green, Amelia. 2013. [“How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps.”](#)

### Weekly presentations

To facilitate the discussion, each week, one or two students will prepare 3-minute presentations on a recent event (political development) related to the topic of the week. The development could be a public debate, a politician’s statement, a policy change, or something else featured in news reports in the past week. The presentation should briefly describe the event of interest and explain how it connects to the respective week’s readings—e.g., confirms or brings into question their arguments. The presenter should also suggest one question based on the readings for the class to discuss. You will sign up for presentations during **Week 1** of the class using [this link](#). Each student should be presenting once during the course. If there are two students presenting on a given week, feel free to cooperate; at the very least, coordinate on the events you are discussing so that you are not talking about the same thing.

### Online reflection tasks (undergraduate students only)

On five weeks of your choice, you will post short online reflections on the assigned readings. The posts should be **between 250 and 300 words long**, and they are due by **11.59 pm the day before the class**. The first paragraph should highlight and briefly explain an important idea that connects the arguments of two or more of the readings. The second paragraph should highlight an aspect or concept that is not clear to you in any of the week’s readings and formulate a question about this issue. We will aim to discuss some of your questions in class.

You will need to complete 5 such reflection tasks throughout the class. You can choose any five weeks, but you should not post on the week when you are presenting.

### Two mini-essays

You will write two essays with short policy proposals suggesting how to deal with foreign propaganda and disinformation in the U.S. (or another country). The **first essay** should include **three ideas for policy interventions, legislation, or community actions** that you believe could

reduce the flow of foreign propaganda and/or its negative impact. Briefly explain each idea: what you propose, how it would work, and why you believe it would be effective. The first essay is due by **5 pm February 26**.

The **second essay** should be a reflection on your first essay in the light of what you have learned in the rest of the course. Discuss your initial three ideas and refine them based on the readings from the class, other research, and class discussions; refer to specific research articles or books. If your ideas have changed completely, explain what changed your mind and what you now believe to be more effective solutions. The essay is due by **5 pm April 15**.

Both essays should be **600-700 words long** and should be posted via class discussions on Canvas. Feel free to be creative in what you are proposing, but proposals should be thoughtful and grounded in scientific evidence on political communication, propaganda, etc. Both essays need to indicate the specific problems you are trying to solve.

Everyone should also read proposals posted by others before the class on February 27 and April 16, respectively, and **post at least 1 comment for another student's proposal**. The comment should be brief (100-150 words) and constructive: explain what you find convincing and useful about the proposal, what and why might not work, etc.

#### Fact-check of a Russian propaganda story

Your goal will be to fact-check a recent story about Russia's invasion of Ukraine or on another topic published by Russian state media. I will provide several articles for you to choose from. You will need to consider several key claims of the article and verify them, explaining why you believe each of them to be true, partly false, or completely false, or why their veracity cannot be established. In doing that, feel free to consider existing fact-checking resources and guides on fact-checking, such as:

- De Witte, Melissa. 2022. [“Seven tips for spotting disinformation related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.”](#) Stanford University. March 3.
- Kiely, Eugene, and Lori Robertson. 2016. [“How to Spot Fake News.”](#) FactCheck.Org. November 18.
- Chapman, Kit. [“5 ways journalists fact-check stories in the age of fake news.”](#) Falmouth University.
- Davis, Wynne. 2016. [“Fake Or Real? How To Self-Check The News And Get The Facts.”](#) NPR. December 5.
- Some additional resources at [KSJ Science Editing Handbook](#).

But please note that the fact-checking work should be your own: you cannot just copy a debunking or a disproof from a news story or a fact-checking website.

The fact-check should be about **900-1000 words long**, and it is due **March 22** via a class discussion on Canvas.

#### Research report

The final project for this course is an original research report that analyzes a certain source—a news outlet, a TV show, a Twitter account, a Telegram channel, etc.—that is involved in promoting Russian/authoritarian propaganda. The source may not be directly linked to the Russian or other authoritarian state. The report should provide a background description of the analyzed source, a summary of that source's activities (e.g., the frequency of posts, daily audience reach, etc.), and an analysis of the common topics and messages produced or

promoted by the source. You should not only summarize the typical messages, but also connect this discussion to course readings and explain in what ways the outlet or the social media account relies on propaganda's strategies or furthers propaganda's goals that we study in the course. The report can use quantitative or qualitative research methods.

This assignment will be evaluated based on the following criteria: (1) relevant outlet or account selected for analysis; (2) systematic approach to collecting and analyzing the evidence; (3) clear presentation of the findings; (4) meaningful conclusions, which could be generalizations about contemporary propaganda and/or policy recommendations; (5) connections to readings assigned in the class and their theoretical arguments. The paper should be clearly written. You may but are not required to use Russian-language sources.

Students should aim for a paper that is **10-12 pages long** (12-point font, double-spaced, excluding bibliography/references). The report is due **May 3**.

**Graduate students** may opt for a different kind of research paper if such work would aid their dissertation or thesis research. Please consult me about that possibility.

#### Research drafts

You will submit two drafts of your final report. The **first draft** is due **February 16 (the end of Week 5)**. This should be a proposal that describes the outlet or social media account that your report will focus on, explains why this source is relevant and important to consider, and mentions the specific content that you will analyze. The proposal should be **1 double-spaced page long**. I will provide comments on source selection and content analysis ideas.

The **second draft** is due **April 5 (the end of Week 11)**. This draft should: (1) briefly present the source you analyze, accounting for my comments for the first draft; (2) provide a preliminary description/analysis of some common themes in the content of the outlet (social media account); (3) refer to several academic studies of propaganda and explain how their arguments are applicable to the outlet or social media account you are analyzing; (4) briefly preview the remaining evidence that you will examine and your possible conclusions. The second draft should be **3-4 double-spaced pages long** and include a preliminary title.

Upon submitting both drafts, you will receive written comments from me and may be asked to schedule a meeting with me to discuss adjustments to the project. If you would like to discuss your plan before submitting the second draft, you are welcome to come to office hours or schedule an appointment with me.

Please feel free to consult existing textbooks and guides on social science research, e.g.:

- Powner, L.C. 2017. *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide*. Sage Publishing.
- Minkoff, S. L. 2016. ["A Guide to Developing and Writing Research Papers in Political Science."](#)

#### Final report presentations

You will **present the key findings** of your research report before submitting it, during **Week 14** of the class. The presentations should be 5 minutes long, and they should clearly describe the source in question, your data/evidence, and your main findings and conclusions. Typically, the presentations will be 5 slides long. The slides are due by **11.59 pm the day before the presentation**.

## GRADING

Your final grade is comprised of the following:

- Discussion participation: 35% (graduate students), 25% (undergraduate students)
- Thoughtful online reflections on weekly readings (undergraduate students only): 10%
- Discussion section presentation: 3%
- Mini-essay 1 (policy proposal) + posting a comment on another student's proposal: 5%
- Mini-essay 2 (reflection on a policy proposal) + a comment on another proposal: 5%
- Fact-check of a Russian propaganda story: 9%
- Research report draft 1 (initial proposal): 2%
- Research report draft 2 (preliminary analysis): 8%
- Final research report: 28%
- Research report presentation: 5%

We will use the following scale for translating any numerical grades into final letter grades:

A: 93.00-100.00%

A-: 90.00-92.99%

B+: 87.00-89.99%

B: 83.00-86.99%

B-: 79.00-82.99%

C+: 76.00-78.99%

C: 72.00-75.99%

C-: 69.00-71.99%

D: 60.00-68.99%

F: below 60%

**Late assignments will be marked down** one letter grade if posted late by up to 24 hours after the due date/time, and one additional grade down every 24 hours after that. Late online reflection posts will not be accepted.

## REQUIRED READINGS

There is no required textbook for this class. The required readings are listed below and available for download on the course website. Some readings on the course schedule are marked as additional: you don't have to read them for class discussions, but they provide useful background information or additional insights into the topic of the week.

## OTHER INFORMATION

**COURSE WEBSITE:** The course website is available via [Courseworks](#). Please check it frequently for announcements, information about assignments, and to access the readings and other materials. You will also use the course website to post your weekly reflections on course materials, your research proposals, papers, and presentation slides.

**OFFICE HOURS:** I encourage you to see me during office hours with any questions. If you are not available during the regular office hours, please email me to make an appointment.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** I take the issue of plagiarism and cheating very seriously. If you are caught plagiarizing or cheating on any assignment, you will receive a failing grade for the class, and you will be referred to the Columbia University Office of Judicial Affairs and Community Standards (OJA). If you are not sure how to use and cite the words of others and when it is appropriate to cite others, please ask me.

**COMMITMENT TO INCLUSIVITY:** This class strives to be an inclusive learning community. As a community, we aim to be respectful to all individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, political beliefs, sexual orientation, status, abilities, or experience. If there are aspects of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion, accurate assessment, or achievement, please notify me as soon as possible. Please feel free to let me and others in the class know your preferred gender pronouns or if you prefer to be called a different name than what is on the class roster.

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** If you believe that you might have a disability that requires accommodation, you should contact the Office of Disability Services at 212-854-2388 and [disability@columbia.edu](mailto:disability@columbia.edu). Please remember that it is your responsibility to report any learning-related disabilities to the Office of Disability Services in a timely fashion in order to ensure your rights to reasonable accommodations. If you are a student with a disability and you have a DS-certified "Accommodation Letter," please email me or come to my office hours to confirm your accommodation needs.

If your religious observance creates a conflict with any aspects of the course, please let me know well in advance, and I will schedule accommodations.

## IMPORTANT DATES

February 16: Research draft 1 due

February 26: Mini-essay 1 due

March 22: Fact-check due

April 5: Research draft 2 due

April 15: Mini-essay 2 due

April 23: Research report presentations

May 3: Final research report (paper) due

## COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

*Note:* This schedule is subject to change. The changes will be posted on the class website ahead of time.

## Part 1: Propaganda Strategies in Autocracies



## **Week 1 (January 16): Introductions; Propaganda and Misinformation**

### **SIGN UP FOR WEEKLY PRESENTATIONS ([link](#))**

- Guriev, Sergei, and Daniel Treisman. 2022. *Spin Dictators: The Changing Face of Tyranny in the 21st Century*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 1 (“Fear and Spin”).
- Jowett, Garth S., and Victoria O’Donnell. 2018. *Propaganda & Persuasion*. Sage Publications. Chapter 1 (“What Is Propaganda, and How Does It Differ from Persuasion?”).
- Berinsky, Adam J. 2023. *Political Rumors: Why We Accept Misinformation and How to Fight It*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 2 (“Rumors in the Political World”).
- Rid, Thomas. 2020. *Active Measures: The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare*. Profile Book. Introduction (“What Is Disinformation?”).

## **Week 2 (January 23): Authoritarian Popularity**

- Frye, Timothy. 2021. *Weak Strongman: The Limits of Power in Putin's Russia*. Princeton University Press. Chapters 2 (“Putinology and Exceptional Russia”) and 4 (“Better to Be Feared and Loved”).
- Matovski, Aleksandar. 2020. “The Logic of Vladimir Putin’s Popular Appeal.” In: Koesel, Karrie, Valerie Bunce, and Jessica Weiss (eds). *Citizens and the State in Authoritarian Regimes: Comparing China and Russia*. Oxford Academic.
- Sharafutdinova, Gulnaz. 2020. *The Red Mirror: Putin's Leadership and Russia's Insecure Identity*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 2 (“The White Knight and the Red Queen”).
- Tsai, Lily L. 2021. *When People Want Punishment: Retributive Justice and the Puzzle of Authoritarian Popularity*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1 (“The Puzzle of Authoritarian Popularity”).
- Buckley, Noah, Kyle L. Marquardt, Ora John Reuter, and Katerina Tertytchnaya. 2023. “Endogenous Popularity: How Perceptions of Support Affect the Popularity of Authoritarian Regimes.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Chapman, Hannah S. 2021. “Shoring Up Autocracy: Participatory Technologies and Regime Support in Putin's Russia.” *Comparative Political Studies* 54(8): 1459-1489.

### **Additional reading:**

- McFaul, Michael. 2021. “Russia’s Road to Autocracy.” *Journal of Democracy* 32 (4): 11–26.
- Greene, Samuel A., and Graeme B. Robertson. 2019. *Putin v. the People: The Perilous Politics of a Divided Russia*. Yale University Press. Chapters 1 and 7.
- Rosenfeld, Bryn. 2018. “The Popularity Costs of Economic Crisis under Electoral Authoritarianism: Evidence from Russia.” *American Journal of Political Science* 62 (2): 382-397.
- Rogov, Kirill, and Maxim Ananyev. 2018. “Public Opinion and Russian Politics.” In: Treisman, Daniel (ed.). *The New Autocracy: Information, Politics, and Policy in Putin's Russia*. Brookings Institution Press: Washington, D.C.

### **Week 3 (January 30): Media Control**

- Walker, Christopher, and Robert W. Orttung. 2014. "Breaking the News: The Role of State-Run Media." *Journal of Democracy* 25 (1): 71-85.
- Yaffa, Joshua. 2020. *Between Two Fires: Truth, Ambition, and Compromise in Putin's Russia*. Crown. Chapter 1 ("Master of Ceremonies").
- Schimpfoss, Elisabeth, and Ilya Yablokov. 2014. "Coercion or Conformism? Censorship and Self-Censorship among Russian Media Personalities and Reporters in the 2010s." *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 22 (2): 295-311.
- Roberts, Margaret E. 2018. *Censored: Distraction and Diversion Inside China's Great Firewall*. Princeton University Press. Chapters 1 ("Introduction") and 3 ("Censorship in China").
- Repnikova, Maria. 2020. "Critical Journalists in China and Russia: Encounters with Ambiguity." In: Koesel, Karrie, Valerie Bunce, and Jessica Weiss (eds). *Citizens and the State in Authoritarian Regimes: Comparing China and Russia*. Oxford Academic.

#### **Additional reading:**

- Gehlbach, Scott, Tetyana Lokot, and Anton Shirikov. 2023. "The Russian Media." In: Wengle, Susanne A. (ed.). *Russian Politics Today: Stability and Fragility*. Cambridge University Press.
- Burrett, Tina. 2011. *Television and Presidential Power in Putin's Russia*. London: Routledge. Chapter 3 ("Elite conflict and the end of independent television").
- Wijermars, Mariëlle. 2021. "Russia's Law 'On News Aggregators': Control the News Feed, Control the News?" *Journalism* 22 (12): 2938-2954.
- Beazer, Quintin, Charles D. Crabtree, Christopher J. Fariss, and Holger Kern. 2022. "When Do Private Actors Engage in Censorship? Evidence From a Correspondence Experiment with Russian Private Media Firms." *British Journal of Political Science* 52 (4): 1790-1809.

### **Week 4 (February 6): Domestic Propaganda: Goals**

- Guriev, Sergei, and Daniel Treisman. 2022. *Spin Dictators: The Changing Face of Tyranny in the 21st Century*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 3 ("Postmodern Propaganda").
- Stockmann, Daniela, and Mary E. Gallagher. (2011). "Remote Control: How the Media Sustain Authoritarian Rule in China." *Comparative Political Studies* 44 (4): 436-467.
- Huang, Haifeng. 2015. "Propaganda as Signaling." *Comparative Politics* 47 (4): 419-437.
- Wedeen, Lisa. 1998. "Acting 'as if': symbolic politics and social control in Syria." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40 (3): 503-523.
- Yanagizawa-Drott, David. 2014. "Propaganda and Conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129 (4): 1947-1994.

#### **Additional reading:**

- Huang, Haifeng, and Nicholas Cruz. 2022. "Propaganda, Presumed Influence, and Collective Protest." *Political Behavior* 44: 1789-1812.



## **Week 5 (February 13): Domestic Propaganda: Tactics and Narratives**

### **RESEARCH DRAFT 1 (INITIAL PROPOSAL) DUE FEBRUARY 16 BY 5 PM**

- Gessen, Masha. [“Inside Putin’s Propaganda Machine.”](#) 2022. *The New Yorker*. May 18.
- Rozenas, Arturas, and Denis Stukal. 2019. “How Autocrats Manipulate Economic News: Evidence from Russia's State-Controlled Television.” *Journal of Politics* 81(3): 982-996.
- Otlan, Yana, Yulia Kuzmina, Aleksandra Rumiantseva, Katerina Tertytchnaya. 2023. “Authoritarian Media and Foreign Protests: Evidence From a Decade of Russian News.” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 39 (6): 391-405.
- Sharafutdinova, Gulnaz. 2020. *The Red Mirror: Putin's Leadership and Russia's Insecure Identity*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 7.
- Alyukov, Maxim. 2022. [“How \(Not\) to Interpret Russian Political Talk Shows.”](#) *The Moscow Times*. November 19.
- Öztürk, Aykut. 2023. “Whisper Sweet Nothings to Me Erdoğan: Developmentalist Propaganda, Partisan Emotions, and Economic Evaluations in Turkey.” *Democratization* 30 (7): 1357-1379.

#### **Additional reading:**

- Tolz, Vera, and Yuri Teper. 2018. “Broadcasting Agitainment: A New Media Strategy of Putin's Third Presidency.” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 34(4): 213-227.
- Alrababa’h, Ala’, and Lisa Blaydes, 2021. “Authoritarian Media and Diversionary Threats: Lessons from 30 Years of Syrian State Discourse.” *Political Science Research and Methods* 9 (4): 693-708.
- Paul, Christopher, and Miriam Matthews. 2016. [“The Russian ‘Firehose of Falsehood’ Propaganda Model: Why It Might Work and Options to Counter It.”](#) RAND Corporation.

## **Week 6 (February 20): Domestic Propaganda: Social Media**

- Gunitsky, Seva. 2015. “Corrupting the Cyber-Commons: Social Media as a Tool of Autocratic Stability.” *Perspectives on Politics* 13 (1): 42-54.
- King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. 2017. “How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, not Engaged Argument.” *American Political Science Review* 111(3): 484-501.
- Stukal, Denis, Sergey Sanovich, Richard Bonneau, and Joshua A. Tucker. 2022. “Why Botter: How Pro-Government Bots Fight Opposition in Russia.” *American Political Science Review* 116 (3): 843-857.
- Lu, Yingdan, and Jennifer Pan. 2021. “Capturing Clicks: How the Chinese Government Uses Clickbait to Compete for Visibility.” *Political Communication* 38 (1-2): 23-54.
- Kuznetsova, Daria. 2023. “Broadcasting Messages via Telegram: Pro-Government Social Media Control During the 2020 Protests in Belarus and 2022 Anti-War Protests in Russia.” *Political Communication*.

#### **Additional reading:**

- Tucker, Joshua A., Yannis Theocharis, Margaret E. Roberts, and Pablo Barberá. 2017. "From Liberation to Turmoil: Social Media and Democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 28 (4): 46-59.
- Barberá, Pablo, and Thomas Zeitzoff. 2018. "The New Public Address System: Why Do World Leaders Adopt Social Media?" *International Studies Quarterly* 62 (1): 121–130.

## **Week 7 (February 27): Foreign Propaganda Strategies**

### **MINI-ESSAY 1 (POLICY PROPOSAL) DUE FEBRUARY 26 BY 5 PM**

- Brandt, Jessica. 2021. "How Autocrats Manipulate Online Information: Putin's and Xi's Playbooks." *The Washington Quarterly* 44 (3): 127-154.
- Cook, Sarah. 2020. *Beijing's Global Megaphone: The Expansion of Chinese Communist Party Media Influence Since 2017*. Freedom House Special Report.
- Benkler, Yochai, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts. 2018. *Network propaganda: Manipulation, disinformation, and radicalization in American politics*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 8 ("Are the Russians Coming?").
- Tambe, Arjun M., and Toni Friedman. 2022. "Chinese State Media Facebook Ads Are Linked to Changes in News Coverage of China Worldwide." *Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review*.
- DiResta, Renée, Shelby Grossman, and Alexandra Siegel. 2022. "In-House Vs. Outsourced Trolls: How Digital Mercenaries Shape State Influence Strategies." *Political Communication* 39 (2): 222-253.
- Myers, Steven Lee. 2023. "[Russia's Latest Disinformation Tactic Exploits American Celebrities.](#)" *The New York Times*. December 9.
- Shih, Gerry, Clara Ence Morse, and Pranshu Verma. 2023. "[Covert Indian operation seeks to discredit Modi's critics in the U.S.](#)" *The Washington Post*. December 10.

### **Additional reading:**

- Brady, Anne-Marie. 2015. "Authoritarianism Goes Global (II): China's Foreign Propaganda Machine." *Journal of Democracy* 26 (4): 51-59.
- Cirone, Alexandra, and William Hobbs. 2022. "Asymmetric Flooding as a Tool for Foreign Influence on Social Media." *Political Science Research and Methods* 1-12.
- Elswah, Mona, and Philip N Howard. 2020. "Anything that Causes Chaos': The Organizational Behavior of Russia Today (RT)." *Journal of Communication* 70 (5): 623–645.
- Xiao, Muiyi, Mozur, Paul, and Gray Beltran. 2021. "Buying Influence: How China Manipulates Facebook and Twitter." *The New York Times*.

## **Week 8 (March 5): Foreign Propaganda: Kremlin's Narratives Abroad**

- Yablokov, Ilya. 2015. "Conspiracy Theories as a Russian Public Diplomacy Tool: The Case of Russia Today (RT)." *Politics* 35 (3-4): 301-315.

- Ramsay, Gordon, and Sam Robertshaw. 2019. "Weaponising News: RT, Sputnik and Targeted Disinformation." King's College London Centre for the Study of Media, Communication & Power (Executive Summary and Chapters 5 and 6; pp.6-8, 47-92).
- Golovchenko, Yevgeniy, Cody Buntain, Gregory Eady, Megan A. Brown, and Joshua A. Tucker. 2020. "Cross-Platform State Propaganda: Russian Trolls on Twitter and YouTube during the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 25 (3): 357-389.
- Crilley, Rhys, and Precious N. Chatterje-Doody. 2021. "From Russia with Lols: Humour, RT, and the Legitimation of Russian Foreign Policy." *Global Society* 35 (2): 269-288.
- Bradshaw, Samantha, and Amélie Henle. 2021. "The Gender Dimensions of Foreign Influence Operations." *International Journal of Communication* 15: 4596–4618.

**Additional reading:**

- Bradshaw, Samantha, Renée DiResta, and Carly Miller. 2022. "Playing Both Sides: Russian State-Backed Media Coverage of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 28 (4): 791-817.
- Farah, Douglas, and Román D. Ortiz. 2023. [Russian Influence Campaigns in Latin America](#). United States Institute of Peace. Special Report.

**HOLIDAY BREAK (March 11-17)**

**Week 9 (March 19): Russian Propaganda and Russia's Invasion of Ukraine**

**FACT-CHECK DUE MARCH 22 BY 5 PM**

- Shevtsova, Lilia. 2020. "Russia's Ukraine Obsession." *Journal of Democracy* 31 (1): 138-147.
- McGlynn, Jade. 2023. *Memory Makers: The Politics of the Past in Putin's Russia*. Bloomsbury Publishing. Chapter 3 ("Past as Present: The Historical Framing of Ukraine, Sanctions and Syria").
- Atlantic Council. 2023. [Undermining Ukraine: How the Kremlin Employs Information Operations to Erode Global Confidence in Ukraine](#).
- Sablina, Liliia. 2023. "The role of social media in facilitating minority mobilisation: The Russian-language pro-war movement in Germany amid the invasion of Ukraine." *Nations and Nationalism* 29 (4): 1422–1438.
- Blankenship, Mary, and Aloysius Uche Ordu. 2022. [Russia's narratives about its invasion of Ukraine are lingering in Africa.](#) The Brookings Institution. June 27.
- Rutland, Peter. 2022. "Why the West is Losing the Global Information War Over Ukraine and How It Can Be Fixed." PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 803.

**Additional reading:**

- Mozur, Paul, Adam Satariano, and Aaron Krolik. 2022. ["An Alternate Reality: How Russia's State TV Spins the Ukraine War."](#) *The New York Times*. December 15.
- Oremus, Will, and Cat Zakrzewski. 2022. ["Big Tech tried to quash Russian propaganda. Russia found loopholes."](#) *The Washington Post*. August 10.

- Tolz, Vera, and Stephen Hutchings. 2023. "Truth With a Z: Disinformation, War in Ukraine, and Russia's Contradictory Discourse of Imperial Identity." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 39 (5): 347-365.
- Goode, J. Paul. 2022. "How Russian Television Prepared the Public for War." PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 761.
- Brandt, Jessica, and Valerie Wirtschafter. 2022. [Working the Western Hemisphere: How Russia spreads propaganda about Ukraine in Latin America and the impact of platform responses](#). Brookings Institution.
- Chapman, Hannah S., and Raushan Zhandayeva. 2023. "Attitudes Toward Russia's War on Ukraine in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan." PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 877.

## **PART 2: Propaganda and the Public**

### **Week 10 (March 26): The Effects of Propaganda and Independent Media on Domestic Audiences**

- Mattingly, Daniel C., and Elaine Yao. 2022. "How Soft Propaganda Persuades." *Comparative Political Studies* 55 (9): 1569–1594.
- Szostek, Joanna. 2018. "News Media Repertoires and Strategic Narrative Reception: A Paradox of Dis/Belief in Authoritarian Russia." *New Media & Society* 20 (1): 68–87.
- Shirikov, Anton. Forthcoming. "Rethinking Propaganda: How State Media Build Trust Through Belief Affirmation." *The Journal of Politics*.
- Krishnarajan, Suthan, and Jakob Tolstrup. 2023. "Pre-war experimental evidence that Putin's propaganda elicited strong support for military invasion among Russians." *Science Advances* 9 (45).
- Huang, Haifeng, and Yao-Yuan Yeh. 2017. "Information from Abroad: Foreign Media, Selective Exposure and Political Support in China." *British Journal of Political Science* 49 (2): 611–36.
- Kern, Holger Lutz, and Jens Hainmueller. 2009. "Opium for the Masses: How Foreign Media Can Stabilize Authoritarian Regimes." *Political Analysis* 17 (4): 377-399.

#### **Additional reading:**

- Simonov, Andrey, and Justin Rao. 2022. "Demand for Online News Under Government Control: Evidence from Russia." *Journal of Political Economy* 130 (2): 259–309.
- Wojcieszak, Magdalena, Erik C. Nisbet, Lea Kremer, Golnoosh Behrouzian, and Carroll Glynn. 2018. "What Drives Media Use in Authoritarian Regimes? Extending Selective Exposure Theory to Iran." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 24 (1): 69–91.
- Alyukov, Maxim. 2023. "Harnessing Distrust: News, Credibility Heuristics, and War in an Authoritarian Regime." *Political Communication* 40 (5): 527-554.
- Greene, Samuel. 2022. ["The Informational Dictator's Dilemma: Citizen Responses to Media Censorship and Control in Russia and Belarus."](#) PONARS Policy Memo. June 12.
- Roudakova, Natalia. 2009. "Journalism as "Prostitution": Understanding Russia's Reactions to Anna Politkovskaya's Murder." *Political Communication* 26 (4): 412-429.

## **Week 11 (April 2): The Role of Citizens and Activists: Counteracting and Co-Producing Propaganda**

### **RESEARCH DRAFT 2 (PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS) DUE APRIL 5 BY 5 PM**

- Dollbaum, Jan Matti, Morvan Lallouet, and Ben Noble. 2021. *Navalny: Putin's Nemesis, Russia's Future?* London: Hurst. Chapters 1 (“Who Is Alexey Navalny?”) and 5 (“The Kremlin V. Navalny”).
- Lokot, Tetyana. 2021. *Beyond the Protest Square: Digital Media and Augmented Dissent*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield. Chapter 8 (“Russia: Protest in the Age of Networked Authoritarianism”).
- Han, Rongbin. 2015. “Defending the Authoritarian Regime Online: China's ‘Voluntary Fifty-Cent Army.’” *The China Quarterly* 224: 1006–25.
- Greene, Samuel A. 2022. “You are what you read: media, identity, and community in the 2020 Belarusian uprising.” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 38 (1-2): 88-106.
- Golovchenko, Yevgeniy, Mareike Hartmann, and Rebecca Adler-Nissen. 2018. “State, Media and Civil Society in the Information Warfare Over Ukraine: Citizen Curators of Digital Disinformation.” *International Affairs* 94 (5): 975–994.

#### **Additional reading:**

- Reuter, Ora John, and David Szakonyi. 2015. “Online Social Media and Political Awareness in Authoritarian Regimes.” *British Journal of Political Science* 45(1): 29-51.
- Enikolopov, Ruben, Alexey Makarin, and Maria Petrova. 2020. “Social Media and Protest Participation: Evidence From Russia.” *Econometrica* 88 (4): 1479-1514.
- Wijermars, Mariëlle, and Tetyana Lokot. 2022. “Is Telegram a “harbinger of freedom”? The performance, practices, and perception of platforms as political actors in authoritarian states.” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 38 (1-2): 125–145.
- Onuch, Olga, Emma Mateo, and Julian G. Waller. 2021. “Mobilization, Mass Perceptions, and (Dis)information: “New” and “Old” Media Consumption Patterns and Protest.” *Social Media + Society* 7 (2).
- Metzger, Megan MacDuffee, and Joshua A. Tucker. 2017. “Social Media and EuroMaidan: A Review Essay.” *Slavic Review* 76 (1) 169-191.

## **Week 12 (April 9): The Effects of Russian Propaganda on Foreign Audiences**

- Eady, Gregory, Tom Paskhalis, Jan Zilinsky, Richard Bonneau, Jonathan Nagler, and Joshua A. Tucker. 2023. “Exposure to the Russian Internet Research Agency foreign influence campaign on Twitter in the 2016 US election and its relationship to attitudes and voting behavior.” *Nature Communications* 14 (62).
- Fisher, Aleksandr. 2020. “Demonizing the enemy: the influence of Russian state-sponsored media on American audiences”. *Post-Soviet Affairs* 36 (4): 281-296.
- Chapman, Hannah S., and Theodore P. Gerber. 2019. “Foreign Media Broadcasts as a Tool of Soft Power: Agenda Setting and Issue Framing Effects of Russian News in Kyrgyzstan.” *International Studies Quarterly* 63 (3): 756–769.

- Peisakhin, Leonid, and Arturas Rozenas. 2018. "Electoral Effects of Biased Media: Russian Television in Ukraine." *American Journal of Political Science* 62 (3): 535-550.
- Erlich, Aaron, and Calvin Garner. 2023. "Is Pro-Kremlin Disinformation Effective? Evidence from Ukraine." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 28 (1): 5-28.
- The Economist. 2022. "[How Russia is trying to win over the global south.](#)" September 22.

**Additional reading:**

- Tomz, Michael, and Jessica L.P. Weeks. 2020. "Public Opinion and Foreign Electoral Intervention." *American Political Science Review* 114 (3): 856-873.

**Week 13 (April 16): Combating Authoritarian Propaganda**

**MINI-ESSAY 2 (REFLECTION ON POLICY PROPOSALS) DUE APRIL 15 BY 5 PM**

- Nyhan, Brendan. 2019. "We Can't Combat Fake News If We Don't Really Understand It." Medium. March 7.
- Pennycook, Gordon, and David Rand. 2020. "The Right Way to Fight Fake News." *The New York Times*. March 24.
- Berinsky, Adam J. 2023. *Political Rumors: Why We Accept Misinformation and How to Fight It*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 4 ("Can We Correct Rumors?").
- Benkler, Yochai, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts. 2018. *Network propaganda: Manipulation, disinformation, and radicalization in American politics*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 13 ("What Can Men Do Against Such Reckless Hate?").
- Aslett, Kevin, Andrew M. Guess, Richard Bonneau, Jonathan Nagler, and Joshua A. Tucker. 2022. "News credibility labels have limited average effects on news diet quality and fail to reduce misperceptions." *Science Advances* 8 (18).
- Jankowicz, Nina. 2020. *How To Lose the Information War: Russia, Fake News, and the Future of Conflict*. Bloomsbury Publishing. Chapter 6 ("Czech Republic: Fighting Lies Means Fighting Opinion").

**Additional reading:**

- Nassetta, Jack, and Kimberly Gross. 2020. "State Media Warning Labels Can Counteract the Effects of Foreign Misinformation." Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review.
- Helmus, Todd C., et al. 2020. "[Russian Propaganda Hits Its Mark: Experimentally Testing the Impact of Russian Propaganda and Counter-Interventions.](#)" RAND Corporation.

**Week 14 (April 23): Research report presentations**

**SLIDES DUE BY 11.59 PM APRIL 22**

**FINAL RESEARCH REPORTS (PAPERS) DUE MAY 3**