Social Media and Democracy

Over the last five years, widespread concern about the effects of social media on democracy has led to an explosion in research from different disciplines and corners of academia. This book is the first of its kind to take stock of this emerging multi-disciplinary field by synthesizing what we know, identifying what we do not know and obstacles to future research, and charting a course for the future inquiry. Chapters by leading scholars cover major topics – from disinformation to hate speech to political advertising – and situate recent developments in the context of key policy questions. In addition, the book canvasses existing reform proposals in order to address widely perceived threats that social media poses to democracy. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

Nathaniel Persily is the James B. McClatchy Professor of Law at Stanford Law School and the Co-Director of the Stanford Cyber Policy Center and Stanford Project on Democracy and the Internet. His scholarship focuses on the law and technology of democracy.

Joshua A. Tucker is Professor of Politics, affiliated Professor of Russian and Slavic Studies, and affiliated Professor of Data Science at New York University. He is the Director of NYU’s Jordan Center for Advanced Study of Russia, a co-Director of the NYU Center for Social Media and Politics, and a co-author/editor of the award-winning politics and policy blog, The Monkey Cage at The Washington Post.
With liberal democracies afflicted by doubt and disquiet, this series probes sources of current apprehensions and explores how such regimes might thrive. What array of pressures most stresses democratic ideas and institutions? Which responses might strengthen these regimes and help them flourish?

Embedded in the Social Science Research Council’s program on “Anxieties of Democracy,” the series focuses on how representative institutions – including elections, legislatures, political parties, the press and mass media, interest groups, social movements, and policy organizations – orient participation, learning, and accountability.

The volumes in the series further ask how particular policy challenges shape the character of democratic institutions and collective actors, and affect their capacity to address large problems in the public interest. These challenges include, but are not limited to: (1) designing democratic institutions to perform successfully under conditions of social and political polarization; (2) managing and orienting contemporary capitalism and alleviating hierarchies of inequality; (3) addressing questions of membership, including population movements and differentiated citizenship; (4) choosing policies to balance national security and civil liberty; (5) exploring the effects of global climate on citizens and the human impact on the environment; (6) managing the development of media and information technologies to ensure they enhance, rather than degrade, robust pluralism and civil political engagement.

Other Books in the Series

Can America Govern Itself? Frances E. Lee and Nolan McCarty
The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) is an independent, international, nonprofit organization driven by its mission to mobilize social science for the public good. Founded in 1923, the SSRC fosters innovative research, nurtures new generations of social scientists, deepens how inquiry is practiced within and across disciplines, and amplifies necessary knowledge on important public issues.

The SSRC is guided by the belief that justice, prosperity, and democracy all require better understanding of complex social, cultural, economic, and political processes. We work with practitioners, policymakers, and academic researchers in the social sciences, related professions, and the humanities and natural sciences. We build interdisciplinary and international networks, working with partners around the world to link research to practice and policy, strengthen individual and institutional capacities for learning, and enhance public access to information.
Social Media and Democracy

The State of the Field, Prospects for Reform

Edited by

NATHANIEL PERSILY
Stanford University

JOSHUA A. TUCKER
New York University