Universität Bremen

Fachbereich 9 - Medienstudiengänge

Department 9 - Media Courses

Kommentar zur Lehrveranstaltung im WiSe 2025/2026

Description of seminars

Veranstalter*in: Vasilisa Kuznetsova
Lecturer:

Titel (dt.):

Titel (engl.): Understanding Social Media Algorithms
(immer angeben)

Beschreibung:
Description:

Computational technologies have become central players in digital communication: entrenched in the infrastructure of social media platforms, machine learning algorithms largely determine the information we consume, our online interactions, and societal trends. Recommended content has become a key aspect of many social media platforms. Designed to maximize user engagement by creating a personalized content experience, algorithmic recommender systems have been criticized for their black-box nature and potential algorithmic harms. These include concerns of accuracy, bias and fairness, algorithmic errors, the risk of 'echo chambers', and the amplification of platform power.

This course explores the political and ethical challenges and opportunities created by algorithms on social media. The seminar aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of the mechanics of content curation and the societal implications of automated decision-making by platforms. Students will gain insights into algorithmic recommendation and automated content moderation, and obtain skills to critically analyze these digital systems. On a theoretical level, students will engage with topics such as algorithmic harms, viral content, algorithmic literacy, and resistance. In the practical part of the seminar, students will learn about algorithm auditing, a research method for studying design, implementation and impact of algorithmic systems. In groups, students will design and conduct small experimental studies to analyze the recommendation systems of platforms.

To complete the course, students are required to submit several assignments during the semester in addition to a final group research project.

Literatur:
Literature:

Berger, J., & Milkman, K. L. (2012). What makes online content viral?. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 49(2), 192-205.

Burrell, J., & Fourcade, M. (2021). The society of algorithms. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *47*(1), 213-237.

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Ferrari, F., & Graham, M. (2021). Fissures in algorithmic power: platforms, code, and contestation. *Cultural Studies, 35*(4–5), 814–832.

Gillespie, T. (2016). 2. Algorithm. In B. Peters (Ed.), *Digital Keywords: A Vocabulary of Information Society and Culture* (pp. 18-30). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jones, C. (2023). How to train your algorithm: the struggle for public control over private audience commodities on Tiktok. *Media, Culture & Society*, *45*(6), 1192-1209.

König, P. D. (2022). Two tales about the power of algorithms in online environments: on the need for transdisciplinary dialogue in the study of algorithms and digital capitalism. *Media, Culture & Society, 44*(7), 1372-1382.

Kruikemeier, S., Boerman, S. C., & Bol, N. (2021). How algorithmic systems changed communication in a digital society. *Media and Communication*, *9*(4), 116-119.

Sandvig, C., Hamilton, K., Karahalios, K., & Langbort, C. (2014). Auditing algorithms: Research methods for detecting discrimination on internet platforms. *Data and Discrimination: Converting Critical Concerns into Productive Inquiry*, *22*(2014), 4349-4357.

Van Dijck, J. (2009). Users like you? Theorizing agency in user-generated content. *Media, Culture & Society*, *31*(1), 41-58.

Velkova, J., & Kaun, A. (2021). Algorithmic resistance: Media practices and the politics of repair. *Information, Communication & Society*, *24*(4), 523-540.