

## Undergraduate Research Symposium May 20, 2011 Mary Gates Hall

### Online Proceedings

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#### POSTER SESSION 2

Commons East, Easel 13

2:30 PM to 3:30 PM

##### **Imperial Profiling: Reading Western Figurations of Global Citizenship through Egypt's "Facebook Revolution"**

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News media frames content much like a picture frame does: the organization of the frame, the perspective it enforces, the establishment of foreground, background, angle and positioning all operate to activate particular frames of seeing (and not seeing). In parsing Western media's portrayal of the Egyptian Revolution predominantly as a "Facebook Revolution," we are exploring what the media's taking-up of one narrative (that Facebook is a liberator's tool and a liberating media) indicates about the technology and its service of imperial subject formation. We deploy Lisa Lowe's theoretical development of notions of assimilation, nation formation and citizenship to assist us in historically situating our argument. Facebook in the dominant media's account is figured as an actor, its presence determining the outcome of the 'revolution' and predetermining the technologized user-consumers produced. The "Facebook Revolution" organizes and supports a narrative of the nation as one of democratic inclusion and propagation rather than as an engine of war, re-constituted and sustained through imperial campaigns in the Middle East. Our research reveals how Western media uses Facebook as an organizing narrative tool to overdetermine the Internet's uses and weave it within a uniform and predictable trajectory of globalization and modernization. We demonstrate how these various media accounts when taken together articulate and valorize Western/U.S. national and global aspirations, and that these frames elide the violence of ongoing imperial interventions. Our research opens up a space for the creative interpretation and co-option of Internet technologies that, when informed, can disrupt unidirectional movement and unilateral effect from the Western center to its local peripheries. This intervention is important if we are to question these techno-scientific narratives and their ideological underpinnings; the

awareness of these frames can enable a more empowering albeit problematic navigation of the Internet and its dominant publics, and their place within globalizing processes.