



Northeastern University

NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

Visiting Speaker

**“You Won’t Believe How
the Chinese Government
Uses Clickbait!”**

Jennifer Pan

Stanford University

March 10th, 12-1pm

177 Huntington Ave. (11th Floor)



With the advent of mass media, government propaganda became highly visible, and authoritarian regimes could easily reach large, captive audiences. We argue that the proliferation of social media and digital technologies has made it necessary for authoritarian regimes to expand their strategies beyond propaganda in order to make propaganda visible. We show how the Chinese government employs such a strategy—disseminating social media posts containing nonpolitical content and clickbait to capture clicks as a means of making the government’s social media account and its propaganda messages more visible. We combine ethnographic methods with the collection of a novel dataset of nearly 200,000 posts made by 213 Chinese city-level governments on WeChat. We use topic modeling, natural language processing, and large-scale human coding to analyze these data, and we find that propaganda agencies across China are heavily reliant on clickbait, and that clickbait is associated with more views and greater reach of the government online.

Jennifer Pan is an Assistant Professor of Communication at Stanford University. Her research explores the politics of authoritarian regimes in the digital age, including censorship, responsiveness, and redistribution with large-scale data from digital media and media platforms.

For more information about this event, visit the NULab website at:

<https://web.northeastern.edu/nulab/event/jennifer-pan/>

This event is free and open to the public, but if you are not a member of the Northeastern community, please email Sarah Connell (sa.connell@northeastern.edu) to RSVP.