

Department for Communication and Media Research **DCM**

Gressly and Fleck Lecture 2018

The DCM is pleased to announce
the Max Gressly and Florian Fleck Lecture
given annually by our visiting resident scholar

Monday, June 11, 2018

16:00-17.15

Room A403



Dr. Camilla Bjarnøe
Postdoc at Department of Political Science, Centre for
Journalism, University of Southern Denmark

Talking about Issues or Character? **An analysis of political news coverage during election campaigns across countries**

She will present a paper made in collaboration with Amber Boydston and James F. Adams (University of California, Davis)

with the following abstract: News media coverage of politicians during election campaigns can influence who wins and who loses elections. Although politicians need to decide whether to run on issues and/or character appeals during those intense periods, it remains striking how little is known about the relationship between how journalists portray candidates and how candidates portray themselves and their opponents in the news. Do politicians and journalist rely on similar or different portrayals, namely focusing on issues more than character or vice versa? Do these portrayals change when Election Days approaches? And do they differ across countries? We investigate those questions based on a systematic content analysis of news media coverage in two national newspapers of one to three election campaigns across ten western democracies (20 election in total). Results show that, at least as captured in their quoted remarks in the news, candidates try to talk about issues, while also directing attention to their opponents' character. Journalists, however, mainly ignore the issues, talking more about character. And this divide becomes even sharper in news coverage of candidates from governing parties (as opposed to opposition parties) and as an election nears. We conclude by discussing the implications of these results for parties' advantages and disadvantages during election campaigns, for the relationship between journalists and politicians, and for normative questions about journalists' role in contemporary democracy.

Camilla Bjarnøe focuses in her research on the use of frames by parties, the dynamics of framing and reframing, journalistic intervention in the public debate and the (de-)mobilizing effect of conflict news framing on political behavior.