

# SEMINAR SERIES



## NINA ISSEL & MIHIR SHARMA JEREMIAH SULLIVAN FELLOWSHIP AWARDEES

**Tuesday, September 30th**

**5:00 PM – In-person & Zoom**

*Coble Hall (801 S. Wright) #108*

### VOICES AFTER VIOLENCE: CROSS-PLATFORM ANALYSIS OF REACTIONS TO TERRORIST ATTACKS

Public reactions to terrorism on social media have been widely studied, revealing surges in fear, anger, and polarized political discourse following attacks. However, little research has been conducted on how these reactions vary across different online platforms. This study examines English-language user comments on Reddit and YouTube in the week following three highly publicized terror attacks on US soil. Using two separate language models to analyze thousands of comments, we assessed the sentiment and emotions of the text data. On average, YouTube comments were slightly more negative than those on Reddit. However, YouTube users exhibited a notably bimodal sentiment distribution, with higher proportions of both positive and negative comments. The elevated levels of joy and sadness on YouTube further highlight these emotional extremes. The findings from this data suggest the need for policymakers to develop platform-specific strategies to prevent the spread of misinformation and counter extremist rhetoric in digital environments.

*Nina Issel is a Junior pursuing a dual degree in Journalism and Global Studies at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Her main interests lie in governance, conflict, and resolution, which she addresses through original research endeavors and work for nonprofit organizations – most recently at ASE Global Bridges.*

*Mihir Sharma is a sophomore at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where he is pursuing a double major in Statistics and Global Studies. Mihir serves as the president of the Security Studies Group, editor-in-chief of the Illinois Global Review, and participates in security research with graduate students and professors.*



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