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Social media helps researchers study a social phenomenon

_Euromaidan Video Conference connects researchers from Edmonton and Ukraine with other scholars and the community_

Edmonton—In November 2013, a simple, peaceful demonstration against a political move to pull Ukraine out of the association agreement with the European Union quickly evolved into protests against violence and corruption. People in Ukraine immediately took to YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, instantly connecting people many time zones away with the events of the social phenomenon called Euromaidan.

Roman Petryshyn, director of MacEwan University’s _Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre_ (URDC), says using the same technology that drove Euromaidan to study the events just made sense. “When the news broke, we met with our colleagues at the University of Alberta and decided to try to involve the academic community in this process as it was happening – providing commentary and analysis much more quickly than the traditional process of publishing articles. It has been amazing to see the feelings and reflections of scholars and students change and evolve in the midst of these events.”

**Conducting research in real time**

Partnering with universities in Ukraine, they formed the Contemporary Ukraine Research Forum and built a web-based platform for researchers and students in both countries and around the world. Here, they began documenting and studying several aspects of Euromaidan – folklore and culture, media and communication, and politics and social structure.

One of those researchers was Jeff Stepnisky, chair of sociology at MacEwan University, who is researching cosmopolitan identity on the maidan. “It has been invaluable to be able to talk to people in Ukraine about the events and their perceptions of events as they’ve been unfolding in real time,” says Jeff. “I was used to spending months and months studying a particular phenomenon and then only writing about it after I was comfortable with my understanding of it.”

Community invited to participate in international video conference

What began as a six-month electronic experiment is culminating with an international video conference on Thursday, June 26. Researchers from MacEwan University, the University of Alberta, the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and the Ukrainian Catholic University will present nine- to 12-minute videos of their work that will be directly integrated with Twitter. It’s a state-of-the-art approach that Roman hopes will interest researchers as well as people in the community.

Video will be live streamed at [http://euromaidan-researchforum.ca/about/international-video-conference/](http://euromaidan-researchforum.ca/about/international-video-conference/). Anyone can provide feedback and ask questions in real time using Twitter.

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