

## SAKSHI BHALLA

---

Institute of Communications Research (ICR), University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign  
✉ [sakshib3@illinois.edu](mailto:sakshib3@illinois.edu) 🌐 [sakshi-bhalla.github.io](https://github.com/sakshi-bhalla)  [LinkedIn](#)  [Google Scholar](#)

### EDUCATION

**Ph.D. in Media & Communications** 2021 onwards  
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign Champaign, IL  
Honors: *Phi Kappa Phi*

**Master of Science in Statistics** 2025  
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign Champaign, IL

**Master of Arts in Linguistics** 2018-2020  
Jawaharlal Nehru University New Delhi, India  
JNU Entrance Test: *All India Rank 1*  
Thesis: *Sociolinguistic Profile of Ahirani* (a previously-undocumented language spoken in Maharashtra, India)

**Bachelor of Arts, with Honors in Journalism** 2012-2015  
Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi New Delhi, India

### PUBLICATIONS

#### *Peer-reviewed articles*

1. **Bhalla, S.**, M. Nelson & M. Spikes. (2025). Classroom Contexts: Teachers Talk Teaching Media Literacy. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*. <https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2025-17-2-3>
2. Ray, R., **S. Bhalla** & H. Taneja. (2025). Fact checkers are seldom used by news users on either side of the partisan divide. *Journal of Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqaf018>
3. **Bhalla, S.**, R. Ray & H. Taneja. (2024). When news is entertainment: Explaining the persistence of misinformation through the information environment. *Information, Communication & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2024.2406819>
4. Khan, A., S. Natarajan, & **S. Bhalla**. (2021). Climate Strikes in Millennial India: Social Capital and "On-Ground" Networks in Digital-First Movements. *Communication, Culture & Critique*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcab035>

#### *Forthcoming*

1. **Bhalla, S.** & H. Taneja. (2025). User-defined Repertoires. In Nai, A., Grömping, M., & Wirz, D. (Eds). *Elgar Encyclopedia of Political Communication*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

### IN PROGRESS

**The Geography of Civic Information**  
*In preparation*

**Following the News: Polarization and the Networked Structure of Attention**  
*In preparation*

**Complements or competitors? Examining human-AI interactions on Sina Weibo**  
*In preparation; with Maggie Zhang*

## AWARDS & FELLOWSHIPS

<i>Illinois Distinguished Fellowship</i> (\$75,000)	2021-25
Bart A. Cummings Grant (\$1,200)	2025
Political Networks Graduate Student Fellowship	2025
ICA Political Communication Section Travel Grant	2025
<i>Methodology Center Summer Institute Scholarship</i> (Full support), Purdue University/ National Institute on Drug Addiction	2025
<i>SPARK Award</i> for Promising Graduate Students, American Political Science Association (Political Communication Section)	2024
<i>Local Journalism Researchers Workshop Travel Grant</i> , Duke University	2024
<i>National Center for Supercomputing Applications</i> (750,000 core hours)	2023
<i>Institute of Communications Research Graduate Travel Grant</i>	2022-2025
<i>Prime Minister's Scholarship</i> , Government of India	2012

## SELECTED CONFERENCE TALKS

**Bhalla, S.** (2025). Paper Trails: Place, proximity and spillovers in local news ecosystems. *Political Communication Section: American Political Science Association*. [Full Paper; not presented given travel restrictions]

**Bhalla, S.** & Maggie Zhang (2025). Competitors or Complements? Examining the Effect of Human-AI Interaction on Human-Human Interaction. *Human-Machine Communication Division: International Communication Association* [Full Paper]

**Bhalla, S.** & Harsh Taneja (2024). Dissecting Selectivity in a fragmented media environment: A novel approach. *APSA Political Communication Preconference*.

**Bhalla, S.** & Harsh Taneja (2024). Entwined Realms: Media Contexts and Information Choice. *American Political Science Association*. [iPoster]

**Bhalla, S.**, Rik Ray & Harsh Taneja (2024). When News is Entertainment. *International Communication Division: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)*, Philadelphia, PA. [Poster]

**Bhalla, S.** & Harsh Taneja (2024). Beyond Preferences: Contextual Influences on News Diets in High-Choice Environments. *Political Communication Division: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)*, Philadelphia, PA. [Poster]

**Bhalla, S.** & Harsh Taneja (2024). Entwined Realms: Examining Media Contexts and News Choice. *A Computational Turn in Journalism: Opportunities and Challenges in a Cross-Disciplinary Field: ICA 2024 Preconference*, Singapore/Virtual.

**Bhalla, S.**, Michelle Nelson & Michael Spikes (2023). Context Matters: Teachers Talk Media Literacy in the Classroom. *Mass Communication Division: International Communication Association*, Toronto, Canada. [Full paper]

**Bhalla, S.**, Rik Ray & Harsh Taneja (2022). Foregrounding contexts in disinformation studies: A study on the failure of fact-checking in India. *What Comes After Disinformation Studies? International Communication Association Preconference*, Paris, France.

Ray, R., **Sakshi Bhalla** & Harsh Taneja (2022). Fact checkers fail to overcome partisan divides in two of the world's largest democracies. *Political Communication Division: International Communication Association*, Paris, France. [Full Paper]

**Bhalla, S.** (2021). Foregrounding Space and context: A discursive study of fact-checking in India.

*South Asia Communication Association: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC)*, Virtual.

Ray, R., **Sakshi Bhalla** & Harsh Taneja (2021). Do fact-checkers overcome partisan divides: An investigation of Indian Twitter users. *International Communication Association*, Virtual. [Full paper]

**Bhalla, S.** (2018). The Global in the Local: Inter-cultural Translation in the Backdrop of Global Advertising. *International Symposium on Linguistics Across Disciplines*, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India. [Full paper]

## WORKSHOPS

**Bhalla, S.** (2025). Following the News: Polarization and the Networked Structure of Attention. *PolNet & PaCSS, 2025*, Cambridge, CA.

**Bhalla, S.** (2024). Diffused News Cultures: Explaining news cultures through spatial relationships. *Local Journalism Researchers Workshop*, Chapel-Hill, NC.

## PRESENTATIONS

**Bhalla, S.** (2024). Navigating Narratives: Selective Exposure to Indian Journalists. *Social Media and Society in India*, Ann Arbor, MI/Virtual.

**Bhalla, S.** (2022). How politics and platforms skew media literacy instruction. *Institute of Communications Research at University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*.

**Bhalla, S.** (2021). Ahirani: A Sociolinguistic Profile. *Centre for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*.

**Bhalla, S.** (2021). Foregrounding Space and context: A discursive study of fact-checking in India. *The Great Mediation (University of Chicago)*.

**Bhalla, S.** (2019). The Technological Mediation of Political Rhetoric on Twitter. *Mediated Campaigns and Unmediated Politics in Millennial India*, Centre de Sciences Humaines, New Delhi.

## INVITED TALKS

**Bhalla, S.** (2025). Classroom contexts: Teachers talk teaching media literacy. *Media Education Lab*.

**Bhalla, S.** (2024). News and Information Consumption in the Contemporary Media Environment: Are Fact-Checkers Enough? *Jio Institute Masterclass*.

## OTHER RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

**Student Researcher** Jun-Aug 2021

Open Markets Institute (Center for Liberty and Journalism)

- Worked with the [Illinois Project](#) team and collected data for multiple research projects.

**Research Analyst** Jan 2021-Apr 2021

Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)

- Developed surveys and interview protocols, oversaw participant recruitment, and coordinated the project team. Findings on social networks in youth-led mobilization in two Indian cities have been published in [Communication, Culture & Critique](#).

**Research Assistant** 2019-20

Indraprastha Institute of Information & Technology (IIIT-New Delhi)

- Studied media parallelism and framing of policy discourse across news publications during the General Election of 2019 in India..

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

### Pre-doctoral Fellow

2021 - Present

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Champaign, IL

- **Lead Teaching Assistant:** Foundations of Data Curation (CS/IS 598)
- **Instructor of Record:** Audience Analysis (ADV 483)
- **Teaching Assistant:** Data Management, Curation & Reproducibility (IS 477), Intro to popular TV and movies (MACS 100), Intro to Advertising (ADV 150)
- **Research Assistant:** Examined approaches to media literacy used by high-school teachers in the state of Illinois through semi-structured interviews with the [IMEDIA](#) research group.

### Graduate Student Mentor

2022 onwards

Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program ([URAP](#)), University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

- Introduced undergraduate students to research on media, information and politics, guiding them on projects. Final project presented at Undergraduate Research Symposium.
- Jury member for the *Social Issues & Policy* and *Social Science & Human Behavior* panels for Undergraduate Research Symposium 2025.

## ADDITIONAL TRAINING

Chicago School of Experimental Economics Summer Workshop	2025
Methodology Center at Purdue Summer Institute	2025
Computational Linguistics Bootcamp, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi	2019
Short-term course on Role of Media in Conflict and Peace	2014
Short-term course on Journalism as a Public Good	2014
Short-term course on Film Appreciation	2013

## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

*Member*, International Communication Association

*Member*, American Political Science Association

*Affiliate*, Center for Information, Technology, and Public Life (CITAP)

## IN THE MEDIA

- Interview with Centre for Innovation & Sustainability in Local Media. [Q&A with media and politics researcher, Sakshi Bhalla](#)  
Also syndicated by [Editor & Publisher](#)
- Report by University of Illinois News Bureau: [Mandatory media literacy education in Illinois schools impaired by digital divides](#)

## DATA SCIENCE & TECH

**Languages & Tools:** R (proficient), Python (intermediate), HTML/CSS (intermediate),  $\LaTeX$ , QGIS/ArcGIS

**Statistical Modelling:** Statistical inference, causal inference, network analysis and spatial econometrics, statistical learning

## SERVICE TO THE DEPARTMENT

ICR Graduate Student Conference: **Organizing team & Reviewer**

2023

ICR Graduate Student Representative

2023-24

## SERVICE TO THE DISCIPLINE

### Reviewing for annual conferences:

International Communication Association (Political Communication, Computational Methods, Journalism Studies, and Human-Machine Communication divisions)

**Reviewing for journals:** *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications - Nature, Journalism Studies, New Media & Society*

## NATURAL LANGUAGES

English (proficient), Hindi (proficient), Punjabi (intermediate), Ahirani (beginner)

## NON-ACADEMIC WORK EXPERIENCE

### Campaign Communication (*Promoted to Senior*)

Mar 2016-Jul 2018

Thinkstr Consultancy Pvt. Ltd.

Gurgaon, India

- Spearheaded strategic communication for NITI Aayog (Government of India), including the nationwide launch of digital payments in a 100 day campaign across 100 Indian cities. See impact [here](#) and [here](#).
- Longhand Awards shortlist.

### Associate

Jun 2015-Feb 2016

D. E. Shaw & Co.

Hyderabad, India

- Evaluated internal program processes and assisted with implementation strategies across multiple teams, supporting high-volume workflows.

## INTERNSHIPS AND PROJECTS

### Summer Intern

Summer 2014

The Coca-Cola Company (India and Southwest Asia HQ)

Gurgaon, India

- Worked with the Public Affairs and Communication Department. Supported analysis and planning for corporate responsibility initiatives, coordinating with multiple cross-functional teams across Marketing and Public Affairs and Communications departments.

### Associate Editor

2012-2014

Counter-talk (The annual journal of Department of Journalism,  
Lady Shri Ram College)

New Delhi, India

## REFERENCES

Available upon request.