

CODING POLITICAL TWEETS

Use the content of the tweet, any hashtags, and any links (if they work) to make your decision.

Scope

These tweets may focus on the United States or other countries and can discuss any level of government (local, state, national, international, etc.). Legislatures, courts, and executive branch officials/agencies are all eligible.

Criteria for a political tweet

- It mentions political appointees, elected officials, or government employees. This includes the pronoun "I" when they tweet about themselves.

Political:

CAPoliticalRev

Jerry Brown's budget depends on \$6.9 billion tax hike initiative: LAO: Gov. Jerry Brown's budget proposal ...<http://t.co/ZZJuwNdO> #tcot

OR

- It mentions government agencies or departments at any level of government. This may be implicit.

Political:

RT_com

Taking photos of clouds earns Texas man a visit from the FBI <http://on.rt.com/twd6qx>

Political:

orinhatch

i am so grateful for the sacrifice of so many to protect this great country. thank you for your service.

OR

- It mentions government policies, decisions, or actions.

Political:

WMUR9

Court Upholds Pot-Growing Conviction: New Hampshire's highest court has upheld a woman's marijuana-growing convi...<http://t.co/WDeOmWmw>

OR

- It mentions the writer or others trying to change some government policy through individual or collective action (including things such as writing Congress).

Political:

EdgeofDesiree

That #SadMomentWhen the Occupy movement dies down.

Political:

NewsHour

somalis are desperate for aid on the deadly streets of Mogadishu <http://ow.ly/6m9p1>

OR

- It mentions electoral candidates, the content of elections and election campaigns, or the outcomes of elections. This includes the pronoun "I" when candidates tweet about themselves.

Political:

IowaGOPer

Huntsman Ends Campaign – Backs Romney | The IowaRepublican: <http://t.co/7kLXZ6qV> -- backs-romney/

OR

- It mentions public appearances or events or statements by political appointees, elected officials, government employees, or political candidates.

Political:

keet4arkansas

I had great breakfast at stoby's this morning in conway <http://ow.ly/i/4na0> #argov

Political:

krom4congress

enjoyed the community services "memorial day ceremony" council at bill barber park today.

Political:

lincolnchafee

townhall.com writes about my announcement this morning - there's one comment, and again, i welcome more! <http://bit.ly/6l4opd>

OR

- It mentions a controversial issue in local, state, national, or international politics in which opinions differ about the policy that government(s) should pursue.

Political:

ImmigAdvocate

On Immigration, Rhetoric on Need to 'Secure the Border' Doesn't Match Reality - International Business Times: "N...<http://t.co/QLwtmPoi>

Clarifications

Coding at the user level vs. coding at the tweet level

Our goal is code at the tweet level, not the user level, so it's the content of the tweet itself that ultimately matters. The user's identity can help us judge whether the tweet itself is political (e.g. if the tweet is ambiguous but *could* be political, the user's identity may serve as a tie-breaker), but the meaning of the tweet itself should determine the coding.

The following example is therefore NOT political. Obviously these users are promoting themselves (which plenty of non-political users do on Twitter as well), but there is no public event or policy or election reference or anything else defined above as political. If you restrict yourself to the tweet itself, this is a non-political conversation taking place between two Twitter users, so it is NOT political.

Not Political:

yostforcongress

@vetsonthewatch so you are another of those "west virginia" kinda guys?? lol. i am from sw va. which is just across the state line.

Local public safety and transportation authorities

Just the mention of local public safety or transportation authorities --

e.g. 'firefighters', 'police', 'cops', 'dc metro' -- is not enough to make something political.

Not Political:

breakingnewz

drudge report - cops: man fed vodka to dog, left animal drunk, staggering...: cops: man fed vodka to dog, left a... <http://t.co/fr0smyra>

Legal vs. political tweets

Tweets about civil and criminal procedures (e.g. traffic violations, criminal sentencing) are NOT political if they are about low-level cases, are not controversial, and do not mention government agencies, officials, policies, or electoral campaigns. The following example is NOT political.

Not Political:

newsweek

rt @thedailybeast: mark goudeau, phoenix #baselinekiller, sentenced to death for the serial killings of nine people <http://t.co/ryeai8cv> ...

NOTE: Typically any decision by the U.S. Supreme Court or a state supreme court will be controversial, have policy implications, or may impact other elements of government, so tweets about these high-level cases will generally be political.

Economic vs. political tweets

Tweets exclusively about economic issues are NOT political if they do not meet the criteria above. The following examples are NOT political.

Not political:

ReutersBreakingviews

rt @breakingviews: @breakingviews economics editor @edwardhadas: ethical economy: the seven billion people question <http://t.co/8xjasctx>

Not political:

isa97

rt @zerohedge: us exports to europe plunge - but aside from global interconnections, europe is completely irrelevant

Political hashtags

In most cases, the presence of a political hashtag indicates a political tweet. However, there are spammy users who try to get readers by using political hashtags, so if the content of a tweet is *obviously* non-political but it contains a political hashtag, code it as NOT political.

Something is claimed to be "political"

If the tweet contains the words "politics" or "political" but there is nothing about the tweet that otherwise satisfies the criteria above, code it as NOT political.

Not political:

politicalticker

political hot topics: thursday, january 19, 2012 - <http://t.co/rnobb6bd>

Not political:

thefix

the 5th most read political story on @washingtonpost? "the story you were looking for was inadvertently published". awesome.

Researching links:

If a link is broken, you should try to search for it. Often you can find the original link by searching for it directly (e.g. put the link in the Google search box). If that doesn't work, see if the tweet appears to be a news headline. If it is, and you can find a news headline and news source that match the tweet exactly, then you can use that in place of the broken link.

More examples

Political:

newshour

[the rundown] negotiations continue in libya, texas wildfire destroys 500 homes <http://t.co/bxps0by>

Negotiations in Libya were with the government or among rebels forming a government, so this meets our political criteria.

Not political:

markknoller

first family kept a low profile over the weekend. their only outing was to watch sasha play in her basketball tournament sat am.

This tweet is about a non-public appearance of a politician's family, so it is NOT political.