

## **Research Question**

How do political creators on Instagram Reels use rhetoric to discuss the information surrounding the ICE controversy?

## **Sampling Plan for Instagram Reels**

To gather a sample of Instagram Reels discussing the ICE controversy, I will first create a new Instagram account to reduce algorithm bias. Then I will use Instagram's search and "Edit Interests" features to find relevant results. The keywords I will use to search are "ICE raids," "ICE deportation," "ICE," "ICE protest," "immigration enforcement," and "ICE controversy." These keywords will help me narrow the population to reels that are involved in the political debate surrounding immigration and ICE. For the "Edit Interests" keywords, I will add "Politics," "I.C.E.," and "United States" to further encourage the algorithm to show relevant political content.

After entering each search term, I will scroll through the results, starting at the top and moving downward. Instagram usually organizes these results using an algorithm that prioritizes relevance and engagement. I will select the first qualifying Reel from the results and continue downward until I have selected five qualifying Reels for each search term. To be included in the sample, each reel must meet the following criteria:

- The Reel must discuss the ICE, immigration, enforcement, or related immigration policy debates.
- The person who posted the Reel must express a position, opinion, or interpretation, rather than just presenting neutral information.
- Reels that contain advertisements or that repost content without contributing anything will not be included.

If a reel does not meet these criteria, I will skip it and continue to the next result until I have collected 30 qualifying reels. For each Reel, I will collect the link, posted date, creator name, description/caption, number of likes, number of comments, bias (left or right), and the top 10 comments. In the end, I will have 30 reels and 300 comments across all the searches that meet my inclusion criteria.

## **Sampling Plan for Comments**

To collect 10 comments from each Reel, I will use a public comment-extraction tool called CommentGrid, which retrieves the first page of comments returned by Instagram's comment-ranking algorithm. This tool returns 15 comments per Reel, but I will only collect the top 10 qualifying comments. This allows me to replace any comments that do not meet the inclusion criteria without reducing the final number of comments per reel.

Since Instagram's algorithm prioritizes comments with higher engagement, these comments most likely represent the most influential and visible responses to each Reel.

If any collected comment is unrelated to the Reel, consists of only emojis or spam, or is a GIF comment, it will be excluded from the sample and will be replaced by another comment in the list.

Using this process, I will collect 10 comments from each of the 30 reels, resulting in a total of 300 comments.

### **Proposal Thesis Statement**

To discover how political creators rhetorically frame the ICE controversy on Instagram Reels, I will analyze 30 Instagram Reels and 300 associated comments to identify the primary use of emotional appeals, credibility strategies, and rhetorical framing within this discourse community.