

[POLS 4970] Politics, Philosophy and Technology

University of Georgia, Spring 2021

Professor L. Jason Anastasopoulos

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:20-3:35
Baldwin Hall, 101D

Office Hours TBD

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Course Objectives

Technology and technological innovations are among the most powerful forces in our political and social world. In this course, we attempt to understand how technology has and continues to shape politics and society and to also understand what we might be headed for in the future. Through philosophy, social science and fiction, we will try to understand what the role of technology is for shaping the state in democratic and authoritarian nations in the past. We will then turn our attention to the future, exploring technological innovations hatched during the digital revolution such as artificial intelligence and blockchain that are reshaping our society. What I hope that you take away from this class is not only an understanding of the role of technology in politics, but a warning about some of the very real dangers that technology poses to human freedom if we are not vigilant.

Attendance and Participation

The most important content from this class will come from the lectures and group assignments during lecture time. Because of this and the rather technical nature of this class, attendance and participation in class is extremely important. If you cannot attend a lecture you must present me with a valid excuse at least 24 hours prior to the start of class unless the situation you encountered was an emergency.

Grading and Requirements (subject to change)

- *Participation/discussion leader: 20% - described below.*
- *A midterm take home exam: 20% - you will have one week to complete.*
- *A final take home exam: 30% - you will have one week to complete.*
- *A short essay (15 double-spaced pages or less) on the political implications of a technology of your choice - 30%.*

Letter Grade	Score (% Correct)
A	90-100%
A-	88-89%
B+	84-87%
B	80-83%
B-	78-79%
C+	74-77%
C	67-73%
D	60-66
F	59 and below

Key Assignment Dates (to be submitted via the ELC)

- Midterm Exam (20%)
 - **Distributed:** *February 25th via ELC*
 - **Due:** *March 4th @ 11:59PM via ELC.*
- Final Exam (30%)
 - **Distributed:** *May 3rd via ELC*
 - **Due:** *May 10th @ 11:59PM via ELC.*
- Short Essay (30%)
 - Due April 22nd @ 11:59PM via ELC. Detailed instructions for the short essay will be distributed at least one month before the paper

Discussion Leaders

Groups of students or individual students will choose a week to be a “discussion leader.” Discussion leaders will lead the class discussion for that week by choosing a reading and preparing a 15-30 minute presentation summarizing the reading and proposing a series of 3-5 discussion points to start off our discussion about the content. Every student **MUST** participate in a group as a discussion leader at least once. **Discussion leader groups can have a maximum of 4 people and if you do not sign up for one week as a discussion leader you will be assigned to a week.**

Required Texts

Bernays, E.L., 2005. *Propaganda*. Ig publishing.

<https://www.booksamillion.com/p/Propaganda/Edward-Bernays/9789563100914?id=8101452543394>

Ellul, J. and Wilkinson, J., 1964. *The Technological Society*. New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books.

<https://www.amazon.com/Technological-Society-Jacques-Ellul/dp/0394703901/> [EW below]

Lee, K.F., 2018. *AI superpowers: China, Silicon Valley, and the new world order*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

<https://www.amazon.com/AI-Superpowers-China-Silicon-Valley/dp/132854639X/>

Postman, N., 2011. *Technopoly*. New York: Random House US.

<https://www.amazon.com/Technopoly-Surrender-Technology-Neil-Postman/dp/0679745408>

Scharff, R. and Dusek, V., 2014. *Philosophy Of Technology*. Malden, Mass.: Wiley Blackwell.

<https://www.amazon.com/Philosophy-Technology-Technological-Condition-Anthology/dp/111854725X/> [SD below]

Available Online at UGA library:

https://na03.alma.exlibrisgroup.com/view/action/uresolver.do?operation=resolveService&package_service_id=23631023010002931&institutionId=2931&customerId=2930

Schwab and Malleret. 2020. *COVID-19: The Great Reset*. World Economic Forum Press.

<https://www.amazon.com/COVID-19-Great-Reset-Klaus-Schwab/dp/2940631123/>

Scott, J.C., 2020. *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. Yale University Press.

<https://www.booksamillion.com/p/Seeing-Like-State/James-C-Scott/9780300246759?id=8101452543394>

Available Online at UGA library:

https://galileo-usg-uga-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/openurl?u.ignore_date_coherence=true&rft.mms_id=9913743576602931&vid=UGA&institution=UGA&url_ctx_val=&url_ctx_fmt=null&isServicesPage=true

Zamyatin, E., 1993. *We*. New York: Penguin Books.

<https://www.amazon.com/We-Yevgeny-Zamyatin/dp/0140185852/>

Prohibition on Recording Lectures.

In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course. Students who have a recording accommodation agree in writing that they:

- Will use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course.
- Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way.
- Understand that the faculty member and students in the class have privacy rights and agree not to violate those rights by using recordings for any reason other than their own personal study.
- Will not release, digitally upload, broadcast, transcribe, or otherwise share all or any part of the recordings. They also agree that they will not profit financially and will not allow others to benefit personally or financially from lecture recordings or other course materials.
- Will erase/delete all recordings at the end of the semester.
- Understand that violation of these terms may subject them to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct or subject them to liability under copyright laws.

COURSE OUTLINE

Course introduction

[WEEK 1: January 14th]

What is technology?

How do we define technology and how has it been thought of historically?

Ancient and Medieval Foundations [WEEK 2: January 18th and 21st]

- ❑ *Introduction* (SD, pgs 3-8).

- ❑ *On Dialectic and 'Techne'*, Plato (SD, pgs 9-18)
- ❑ *On 'Techne' and 'Episteme'*, Aristotle (SD, pgs 19-24)
- ❑ *The Greek Concepts of 'Nature' and 'Technique'*, Scadenwaldt (SD, pgs 25-32)
- ❑ *On the Idols, the Scientific Study of Nature , and the Reformation of Education*, Francis Bacon, (SD, pgs 33-46).
- ❑ *On the Sciences and Arts*, Jean Jacques Rousseau (SD 68-73)

Modern conceptions [WEEK 3: January 26th and 28th]

- ❑ *Capitalism and the Modern Labor Process*, Karl Marx (SD pgs 74-88).
- ❑ Ellul, "The Technological Society"
 - ❑ Chapter 1: "Situating the technical phenomenon" and "Historical development"
- ❑ *Conflicting Visions of Technology*, Tiles and Oberdiek (SD, pgs 249-260)

The relationship between science and technology

[WEEK 4: February 2nd and 4th]

- ❑ Positivist and Postpositivist Philosophies of Science, (SD, pgs 91-100).
- ❑ *The Scientific Conception of the World: The Vienna Circle*, Carnap, Hahn and Neurath (SD, pg 101-110)
- ❑ *Paradigms and Anomalies in Science*, Thomas Kuhn, (SD, pgs 111-120)
- ❑ *Experimentation and Scientific Realism*, Ian Hacking (SD, pgs 121-130)
- ❑ *On the Aims of a Philosophy of Technology*, Jacques Ellul (SD, pgs 205-209)

Technology in Society

What is the role of technology in society at large? What are some of the societal problems caused by technology or ameliorated by technology? What dangers do we face if we continue to rely on technology?

[WEEK 5: February 9th and 11th]

- ❑ Zamyatin, E., 1993. *We*. New York: Penguin Books.

[WEEK 6: February 16th and 18th]

- ❑ Postman, N., 2011. *Technopoly*. New York: Random House US., pgs. 3-70.
- ❑ *The Question Concerning Technology*, Martin Heidegger (SD, pgs. 299-317)

Technology and the State

What is the role of technology in the state more generally?

[WEEK 7: February 23rd and 25th]

Overview

- ❑ Ellul, J. *The Technological Society*, Chapter IV - Technique and the State
- ❑ [Gardner, Richard N. "The hard road to world order." *Foreign Affairs*. 52 \(1973\): 556.](#)

[WEEK 8: March 2nd and 4th]

- ❑ Scott, J.C., 2020. *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. Yale University Press.
 - ❑ *Management and population control*, pgs 9-84.
 - ❑ *Authoritarianism and Technology*, pgs 85-180.
- ❑ Movie: *Gattaca* (1997).
 - ❑ This can be watched for free here: <https://archive.org/details/Gattaca>

Technology and Democracy

What is the role of technology in democratic nations? How can technology shape the future of democracy? Is technology good or bad for democracy?

[WEEK 9: March 9th and 11th]

Propaganda, persuasion and control

- ❑ [Bernays, E.L., 1942. The marketing of national policies: A study of war propaganda. *Journal of Marketing*, 6\(3\), pp.236-244.](#)
- ❑ Bernays, E.L., 2005. *Propaganda*. Ig publishing.
 - ❑ Introduction.
 - ❑ "Organizing Chaos"
 - ❑ "The New Propaganda"
 - ❑ "The New Propagandists"
 - ❑ "The Psychology of Public Relations"
- ❑ *The New Forms of Control*. Herbert Marcuse. (SD pgs 449-455).
- ❑ Ellul, "The Technological Society", pp 248-284.

Brave new world: technology and political transformation

Artificial Intelligence

[WEEK 10: March 16th and 18th]

What is artificial intelligence?

- ❑ What is AI, IBM <https://www.ibm.com/cloud/learn/what-is-artificial-intelligence>
- ❑ Movie: *Blade Runner 2049*

[WEEK 11: March 23rd and 25th]

AI and Democracy

- ❑ König, P.D. and Wenzelburger, G., 2020. Opportunity for renewal or disruptive force? How artificial intelligence alters democratic politics. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37(3), p.101489.
- ❑ Will Democracy Survive AI?
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/will-democracy-survive-big-data-and-artificial-intelligence/>
- ❑ Unver, H.A., 2018. Artificial intelligence, authoritarianism and the future of political systems. *EDAM Research Reports*. * possible

[WEEK 12: March 30th and April 1st]

AI and the Clash of Superpowers

- ❑ Lee, K.F., 2018. *AI superpowers: China, Silicon Valley, and the new world order*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. pgs 1-174

[WEEK 13: April 6th and April 8th]

Privacy, Surveillance and Dystopia

- ❑ Schwab, "COVID-19 The Great Reset"
 - ❑ Introduction: 11-21
 - ❑ Technological Reset: 151-173.
- ❑ Movie: *The Minority Report*

Blockchain, Cryptocurrency and the Internet of Things (IoT)

[WEEK 14: April 13th and April 15th]

Overview

- ❑ Drescher, *Blockchain Basics*. Pgs 1-112
- ❑ Blockchain Technology Explained (YouTube Video):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOVAbKKSH10>

[WEEK 15: April 20th and April 22nd]

Blockchain in Government

❑ Social Credit and E-Government

- ❑ Hou, H., 2017, July. "The application of blockchain technology in E-government in China." In 2017 26th International Conference on Computer Communication and Networks (ICCCN) (pp. 1-4). IEEE.
- ❑ Xu et al. 2018. "Constructing trustworthy and safe communities on a blockchain-enabled social credits system". In Proceedings of the 15th EAI International Conference on Mobile and Ubiquitous Systems: Computing, Networking and Services (pp. 449-453).
https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/3286978.3287022?casa_token=jc7wi2ZSOmkAAAA:Rnlm74_jX6PQ4IU4DrrgZKI4DojCnLjPYQvpi8ldyJ96ScR20k6eEj0gxZLI L4X9jUFUBEscvgVv

[WEEK 16: April 22nd and April 29th]

Blockchain Monetary Policy: Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) and Cryptocurrency.

- ❑ Bordo, M.D. and Levin, A.T., 2017. Central bank digital currency and the future of monetary policy (No. w23711). National Bureau of Economic Research.

Blockchain and E-Voting

- ❑ [Culnane, C., Essex, A., Lewis, S.J., Pereira, O. and Teague, V., 2019. Knights and knaves run elections: Internet voting and undetectable electoral fraud. *IEEE Security & Privacy*, 17\(4\), pp.62-70.](#)
- ❑ [Park, S., Specter, M., Narula, N. and Rivest, R.L., 2020. Going from bad to worse: from internet voting to blockchain voting.](#)

Statement about Students with Disabilities

Students with special needs that require accommodation should notify me and the Office for Disability Services in the first two weeks of the course so appropriate arrangements can be made. All information and documentation of special needs is confidential.

Statement about Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

Students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance of the policy is not an acceptable defense. See also <https://ovpi.uga.edu/academic-honesty>.

CDC Recommendations Regarding COVID-19

- Wear a mask to protect yourself and others to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Stay at least 6 feet from others who don't live with you and avoid crowded areas.
- Wash your hand with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.