[POLS 4420] Politics and Technology

University of Georgia, Spring 2022

Professor L. Jason Anastasopoulos

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:45-2:00
Baldwin Hall, 101D

Office Hours Tu, Th 2-3pm
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Course Objectives

Technology is one of the most powerful forces in our political and social world. In this course, we attempt to understand how technology has shaped, and continues to shape, politics and society with an eye towards what we might be headed for in the future. Through philosophy, social science and fiction, we will try to understand the role that technology plays in shaping the state in democratic and authoritarian nations in the past and then turn our attention to the future, exploring technological innovations hatched during the digital revolution such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology and blockchain which are transforming our society and culture at this very moment.

What I hope that students will 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 and dignity 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)

- *Attendance: 10%*
- *Participation*
  - *Discussion leader : 20% - described below.*
  - *Think-pair-share in-class group activity: 10%*
- *A midterm take home exam: 20% - you will have 24 hours to complete.*
- *A final take home exam: 40% - you will have one week to complete.*

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 15th via ELC*
  - **Due:** *February 16th @ 3:00PM via ELC.**
- Final Exam (40%)
  - **Distributed:** *May 3rd via ELC*
  - **Due:** *May 10th @ 3:00PM via ELC.**

* NOTE: you will lose a total of 10 points (out of 100) for each day that the midterm or final is late without excuse. For example, if you upload an exam 1 day late, the best

score you can get is 90 out of 100. If you upload an exam 2 days late, the best score you can get is 80/100 etc.

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.

If you sign up as a discussion leader more than once you will receive extra credit equivalent to 2% of your final grade.

 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]**

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

What is technology?

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

Course Introduction   **[WEEK 1: January 11th and 13th]**

Ancient Conceptions   **[WEEK 2: January 18th and 20th]**

- ❏ *Introduction* (SD, pgs 3-8).
- ❏ *On Dialectic and 'Techne',* Plato (SD, pgs 9-18)
- ❏ *On 'Techne' and 'Episteme'*, Aristotle (SD, pgs 19-24)

Medieval and Enlightenment Conceptions   **[WEEK 3: January 25th and 27th]**

- ❏ *On the Idols, the Scientific Study of Nature , and the Reformation of Education,* Francis Bacon, (SD, pgs 33-46).

Enlightenment conceptions   **[WEEK 4: February 1st and 3rd]**

- ❏ *On the Sciences and Arts,* Jean Jacques Rousseau (SD 68-73)

Modern conceptions   **[WEEK 5: February 8th and 10th]**

- ❏ Ellul, "The Technological Society"
    - ❏ Chapter 1: "Situating the technical phenomenon" and "Historical development"

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?

**************** MIDTERM EXAM DISTRIBUTED TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15th *****************

[WEEK 6: February 15th and 17th]

- ❏ Postman, N., 2011. *Technopoly*. New York: Random House US., pgs. 3-70.

Technology and the State

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

[WEEK 7: February 22 and 24]

- ☐ Foucault, Michel. "Panopticism." (SD pp 654-667)

[WEEK 8: March 1 to 3]

Overview
- ❏ Ellul, J. *The Technological Society*, Chapter IV - Technique and the State
- ❏ Movie: *They Live*. Free version is here: https://archive.org/details/they-live-1988

[WEEK 9: March 15 to 17]

- ❏ 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 10: March 22 to 24]

Propaganda, persuasion and control

- ❏ DiResta, R. (2018). Computational propaganda: If you make it trend, you make it true. *The Yale Review, 106*(4), 12-29.
- ❏ Bernays, E.L., 2005. *Propaganda*. Ig publishing.
    - ❏ Introduction.
    - ❏ "Organizing Chaos"
    - ❏ "The New Propaganda"
    - ❏ "The New Propagandists"
    - ❏ "The Psychology of Public Relations"

Brave new world: technology and political transformation

[WEEK 11: March 29 to 31]

The Internet

A brief history of the Internet. What is the Internet? Overview of the Internet and Society

- ❏ Leiner, Barry M., et al. "A brief history of the Internet." ACM SIGCOMM Computer Communication Review 39.5 (2009): 22-31. https://arxiv.org/html/cs/9901011
- ❏ Margetts, Helen. "The Internet and Democracy." The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies

Artificial Intelligence

[WEEK 12: April 5th to 7th]

What is artificial intelligence?

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

AI and Democracy
- ❏ Will Democracy Survive AI?
  https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/will-democracy-survive-big-data-and-artificial-intelligence/

[WEEK 13: April 12 to 14]

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 14: April 19 to 21]

Privacy, Surveillance and Dystopia
- ❏ Movie: *The Minority Report*
- ❏ *"Welcome To 2030: I Own Nothing, Have No Privacy And Life Has Never Been Better"*
  https://www.forbes.com/sites/worldeconomicforum/2016/11/10/shopping-i-cant-really-remember-what-that-is-or-how-differently-well-live-in-2030/?sh=4abde9d51735

Blockchain, Cryptocurrency and the Internet of Things (IoT)

[WEEK 15: April 26 to 28]

Overview
- ❏ Blockchain Technology Explained (YouTube Video):
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOVAbKKSH10
- ❏ *"Introduction to Bitcoin"* https://www.coinbureau.com/education/what-is-bitcoin/

Central Bank Digital Currencies and the Cashless Society

- [ ] *"The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly of Central Bank Digital Currencies or CBDCs"* https://hackernoon.com/the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly-of-central-bank-digital-currencies-or-cbdcs-2b213wi5
- [ ] *"CENTRAL BANK DIGITAL CURRENCIES AND THE ORWELLIAN NEW WORLD ORDER"* https://bitcoinmagazine.com/culture/cbdcs-orwellian-new-world-order

[WEEK 16: May 3]

The Internet of Things (IoT)
Readings
- US Government, GAO 2020 Report: *"INTERNET OF THINGS Information on Use by Federal Agencies."* (pgs 1-29 only): https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-20-577.pdf

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.