

[POLS 4420] Politics and Technology

University of Georgia, Spring 2025

Professor L. Jason Anastasopoulos (“Dr. A”)

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:20 PM - 3:35 PM
Baldwin Hall, 301

Office Hours:
3:40PM - 4:40PM Tuesdays
Baldwin Hall 280E

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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 political values and international political orders 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, 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 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 Items

- *Participation*
 - *Discussion leader : 20 Points. +2 Points Extra Credit for signing up more than once.*
- *Weekly Quizzes: 30 points. Quizzes will be posted each week after class and will be completed via the eLC.*
- *A final group project (details posted on eLC):*
 - *Final group project proposal: 10 points.*
 - *Final group project presentation: 10 points.*
 - *Final group project paper: 20 points.*

Grading Points Breakdown

Activity	Points
Discussion Leader	30
Weekly Quizzes	30
Final Group Project Proposal	10
Final Group Project Presentation	10
Final Group Project Paper	20

Key Assignment Dates

Activity	Date
Discussion Leader	Varies, Presentations Every Thursday. Please send me presentations after you present.
Quizzes	Weekly
Final Group Project Proposal	10/16
Final Group Project Presentation Slides	11/13
Final Group Project Presentations	11/13, 11/18, 11/20

Final Group Project Paper	12/04
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Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Total Points
A	90-100+
A-	85-89
B+	84-87
B	80-83
B-	78-79
C+	74-77
C	67-73
D	60-66
F	59 and below

Late Policy

You will lose a total of 2 points for each day an assignment is late without excuse.

Discussion Leaders

Either individually or in groups of a maximum of 3, 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 15-25 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 there are extra slots you sign up as a discussion leader more than once you will receive extra credit equivalent to +2 points on your final grade. Each group can be a discussion leader a MAXIMUM of 2 times.**

Discussion leader groups can have a maximum of 3 people and if you do not sign up for one week as a discussion leader you will be assigned to a week.

Discussion leader assignments can be found here: TBA

Required Books

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]

*You are encouraged to buy a hard copy of this book but it will also be available for free as a PDF on the ELC.

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 (discussion leader readings are in red)

Week	Topic	Readings
Week 1 08/19	<i>Course Introduction</i>	
<u>What is Technology</u> How do we define technology and how has it been thought of historically?		
Week 2 08/21-08/26	<i>Ancient Conceptions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ <i>Introduction</i> (SD, pgs 3-8). ❑ Plato's Republic, The Allegory of the Cave (eLC) ❑ <i>On 'Techne' and 'Episteme', Aristotle (SD, pgs 19-24)</i>
Week 3 08/28-09/02	<i>Medieval Conceptions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ <i>Novum Organum - Francis Bacon (SD 37-38)</i> ❑ <i>On the Idols and On the Scientific Study of Nature (An excerpt from the unfinished novel "The New Atlantis") - Francis Bacon (SD 39-41)</i>
Week 4 09/04-09/09	<i>Enlightenment Conceptions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ What is the Enlightenment and How Did it Transform Politics? https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/what-enlightenment-and-how-did-it-transform-politics ❑ <i>On the Sciences and Arts, Jean Jacques Rousseau (SD 68-73)</i>
Week 5 09/11-09/16	<i>Modern Conceptions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ <i>The Question Concerning Technology - Martin Heidegger (SD 305-317)</i> ❑ <i>The Matrix (Movie).</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ You can rent this for \$3.99 on Amazon Prime or

		<input type="checkbox"/> There is a free (but unreliable) version on the Internet Archive: https://dn720300.ca.archive.org/0/items/the.-matrix.-1999.-remastered.-proper.-1080p.-blu-ray.-h-264.-aac-rarbg/The.Matrix.1999.REMASTERED.PROPER.1080p.BluRay.H264.AAC-RARBG.mp4
Technology, Politics and the State What is the role of technology in politics and the state, broadly defined?		
Week 6 09/18-09/23	Overview	<input type="checkbox"/> Can Artifacts Have Politics?, Langdon Winner (SD 668-679) <input type="checkbox"/> Postman, N., 2011. <i>Technopoly</i> . New York: Random House US., pgs. 3-70.
Week 7 09/25-09/30	International Relations and Technological Change	<input type="checkbox"/> Gartzke, Erik. "The capitalist peace." <i>American journal of political science</i> 51, no. 1 (2007): 166-191. (eLC) <input type="checkbox"/> Drezner, D.W., 2019. "Technological change and international relations". (eLC)
Week 8 10/02-10/07	Technology and the Law	<input type="checkbox"/> Liu, H.W., Lin, C.F. and Chen, Y.J., 2019. Beyond State v Loomis: artificial intelligence, government algorithmization and accountability. <i>International journal of law and information technology</i> , 27(2), pp.122-141. <input type="checkbox"/> Movie: Gattaca (1997) <input type="checkbox"/> Available for free on the Internet Archive: https://archive.org/details/Gattaca

The Technological Origins of Democracy and Dictatorship

What is the role of technology in fostering opposing political systems such as democracy and authoritarianism?

Week 9 10/09-10/14	Perspectives on Technology and Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Barber, Benjamin R. "Three scenarios for the future of technology and strong democracy." (eLC)❑ Fukuyama, F., Richman, B. and Goel, A., 2021. "How to save democracy from technology: ending big tech's information monopoly." Foreign Aff., 100, p.98. (eLC)
Week 10 10/16-10/21	Technological Progress and Authoritarianism ***Group Project Proposal Due on March 20th**	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Mumford, L., 1964. "Authoritarian and Democratic Technics." (eLC)❑ Foreign Affairs. 2021. China's Techno-Authoritarianism Has Gone Global" (eLC)❑ Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman, "Informational Autocrats" (eLC)

The Brave New World: Modern Technology and Political Transformation

Week 11 10/28 Note: No Class on October 23rd.	The Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ <i>Rosenzweig, Roy. "Wizards, bureaucrats, warriors, and hackers: Writing the history of the Internet." (eLC)</i>❑ Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron. "The Californian Ideology" (eLC)
Week 12 10/30-11/04	Artificial Intelligence: Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ "What is Artificial Intelligence?" Darrell West: https://www.brookings.edu/research/what-is-artificial-intelligence/

		<input type="checkbox"/> Will Democracy Survive AI? https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/will-democracy-survive-big-data-and-artificial-intelligence/ <input type="checkbox"/> Risse, M., 2022. Artificial Intelligence and the Past, Present, and Future of Democracy.(eLC)
No Class 04/03 Due to Midwest Pol. Sci. Assoc. Conference		
Week 13 11/06-11/11	Artificial Intelligence and the Liberal Democracy	<input type="checkbox"/> Harari, Y. N. (2018). Why technology favors tyranny. The Atlantic, 322(3), 64-73.(eLC) <input type="checkbox"/> Kreps, S. and Kriner, D., 2023. How AI threatens democracy. Journal of Democracy, 34(4), pp.122-131.(eLC)
Week 14 11/13-11/20	Group Project Presentation Slides due on 11/13	GROUP PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

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>.