[POLS 4420] Politics and Technology

University of Georgia, Spring 2026

Professor L. Jason Anastasopoulos ("Dr. A")

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:15 PM - 2:35 PM
Baldwin Hall, 202

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*
  - *Participation: 10 Points. Attendance + class participation in activities*
  - *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
Participation/Attendance	10
Discussion Leader	20
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	03/19

Final Group Project Presentation Slides	04/16
Final Group Project Presentations	04/16, 04/21, 04/23
Final Group Project Paper	04/30

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 4 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 01/15	*Course Introduction*	
<td colspan="3" style="background-color:#f4cccc">**What is Technology** How do we define technology and how has it been thought of historically?</td>		
Week 2 01/20-01/22	*Ancient Conceptions*	❏ *Introduction* (SD, pgs 3-8). ❏ Plato's Republic, The Allegory of the Cave (eLC) ❏ ***On 'Techne' and 'Episteme', Aristotle (SD, pgs 19-24)***
Week 3 01/27-01/29	*Medieval Conceptions*	❏ ***Novum Organum* - Francis Bacon (SD 37-38)** ❏ *On the Idols and On the Scientific Study of Nature (An excerpt from the unfinished novel "The New Atlantis")* - Francis Bacon (SD 39-41)
Week 4 02/03-02/05	*Enlightenment Conceptions*	❏ What is the Enlightenment and How Did it Transform Politics? https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/what-enlightenment-and-how-did-it-transform-politics ❏ ***On the Sciences and Arts,* Jean Jacques Rousseau (SD 68-73)**
Week 5 02/10-02/12	*Modern Conceptions*	❏ *The Question Concerning Technology* - Martin Heidegger (SD 305-317) ❏ **The Matrix (Movie).** ❏ You can rent this for $3.99 on Amazon Prime or

		❏ 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 02/17-02/19	*Overview*	❏ ***Can Artifacts Have Politics?, Langdon Winner (SD 668-679)*** ❏ Postman, N., 2011. *Technopoly*. New York: Random House US., pgs. 3-70.
Week 7 02/24-02/26	**International Relations and Technological Change**	☐ Gartzke, Erik. "The capitalist peace." *American journal of political science* 51, no. 1 (2007): 166-191. (eLC) ☐ **Drezner, D.W., 2019. "Technological change and international relations". (eLC)**
NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK 03/03-03/05		
Week 8 03/10-03/12	**Technology and the Law**	❏ Liu, H.W., Lin, C.F. and Chen, Y.J., 2019. Beyond State v Loomis: artificial intelligence, government algorithmization and accountability. International journal of law and information technology, 27(2), pp.122-141. ❏ **Movie: Gattaca (1997)** ❏ **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 03/17-03/19	**Perspectives on Technology and Democracy**	❏ 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 03/24-03/26	**Technological Progress and Authoritarianism**	❏ 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 03/31-04/02	**The Internet**	☐ *Rosenzweig, Roy. "Wizards, bureaucrats, warriors, and hackers: Writing the history of the Internet." (eLC)* ☐ **Zizi Papacharissi (2002). "The Virtual Sphere: The Internet as a Public Sphere." New Media & Society 4(1):9–27. (eLC)**
Week 12 04/07-04/09	**Artificial Intelligence: Overview**	☐ "What is Artificial Intelligence?" Darrell West: https://www.brookings.edu/research/what-is-artificial-intelligence/

		☐ **Risse, M., 2022. Artificial Intelligence and the Past, Present, and Future of Democracy.(eLC)**
Week 13 04/14	**Artificial Intelligence and the End of Liberal Democracy?**	☐ Harari, Y. N. (2018). Why technology favors tyranny. The Atlantic, 322(3), 64-73.(eLC) ☐ **Kreps, S. and Kriner, D., 2023. How AI threatens democracy.** *Journal of Democracy, 34*(4), **pp.122-131.(eLC**)
Week 14 04/16, 04/21, 04/22	**Group Project Presentation Slides due on 04/16**	**GROUP PROJECT PRESENTATIONS**

Students are expected to attend each scheduled class meeting, to be on time, and to be prepared for each class session. In addition, students are expected to actively participate in class.

Note that students must inform the instructor in advance if they are unable to attend class.

All electronic devices and other extraneous materials must be put away before class. To make sure that all students feel comfortable, it is expected that all students will follow the following etiquette rules:

- be in your seat and ready to begin class promptly at the official start time
- refrain from talking while the instructor or other students are presenting material
- turn off or silence all electronic devices
- refrain from using cellphones or other electronic devices for any activity that is not directly related to class
  **Unless specifically required for a class activity or by prior approval of the course instructor, students should not use computers, cell phones or other electronic devices during class. Students who violate these policies will be asked to leave class immediately. Repeat offenders may be dropped from the class.

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.

PREFERRED NAME AND PRONOUNS

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I am eager to address you by your preferred name and/or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources

UGA Well-being Resources promote student success by cultivating a culture that supports a more active, healthy, and engaged student community.

Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit sco.uga.edu. Student Care & Outreach helps students navigate difficult circumstances by connecting them with the most appropriate resources or services. They also administer the Embark@UGA program which supports students experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity.

UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health, any time, any place. Whether on campus, or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help.

- Well-being Resources: well-being.uga.edu
- Student Care and Outreach: sco.uga.edu
- University Health Center: healthcenter.uga.edu
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services: caps.uga.edu or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273
- Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: healthpromotion.uga.edu
- Accessibility and Testing: accessibility.uga.edu

Additional information, including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting https://well-being.uga.edu.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require accommodations to participate in course activities or meet course requirements should contact the course instructor during regular office hours or by appointment. To request academic accommodations due to a disability, you can also contact the Disability Resource Center, 114 Clark Howell Hall, 706-542-8719 (http://drc.uga.edu). If you have a letter from Disability Services indicating you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to me as early as possible so we can discuss the accommodations you might need for class.

UGA Student Honor Code

"I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others." A Culture of Honesty, the University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at honesty.uga.edu . Every course syllabus should include the instructor's expectations related to academic honesty.

Policy on Generative AI

1) Purpose

This course values independent thinking, clear writing, and evidence-based argumentation. Generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot) may be used in limited ways that support learning without replacing your own analysis or prose.

2) Core rule

You may use generative AI to support your work (research assistance, brainstorming, editing), but you may not use it to produce your original written content or intellectual contribution.

3) Definitions

- Generative AI (GenAI): Tools that produce text, images, code, or other content in response to prompts.
- Original writing: Your thesis, claims, reasoning, synthesis, interpretation, organization of arguments, and the sentences/paragraphs that communicate them.
- Editing: Improving clarity, grammar, structure, or style of text you already wrote.

4) Permitted uses (allowed)

You may use GenAI for:

1. Research support
   - Generating keyword lists and search strategies for library databases.
   - Suggesting relevant subtopics, counterarguments, or angles to investigate.
   - Summarizing *sources you provide* (e.g., an article you upload) to help comprehension.
   - Helping you draft an annotated bibliography *only if the summaries are your own rewrite and you verify every claim with the original source*.
2. Writing improvement (editing only)
   - Grammar, spelling, clarity, concision, transitions, tone adjustments.
   - Reformatting citations you already have (e.g., converting to Chicago/APA) if you verify accuracy.
   - Creating outlines based on your existing draft and notes.
3. Study support
   - Practice questions, flashcards, concept explanations, and mock debates for exam prep.

5) Prohibited uses (not allowed)

You may not use GenAI to:

1. Write original text for submission
   - No AI-generated paragraphs/sentences for introductions, literature reviews, theory sections, analysis, results, discussion, or conclusions.
   - No "write my paper/section" prompting, even if you later lightly edit it.
2. Generate your ideas or analysis
   - No AI-produced thesis statements, argumentation, interpretation of evidence, causal claims, or synthesis presented as your own.
   - No AI-generated "findings" or "implications."
3. Create or fabricate sources, quotations, data, or citations
   - AI hallucinations count as falsification. Any invented citation or misrepresented source is a serious violation.
4. Bypass assignment objectives
   - If an assignment is explicitly designed to assess your writing, reasoning, or coding skill, AI assistance beyond what is stated is not permitted.

6) Disclosure requirement (always required if you used GenAI)

If you use GenAI in any way beyond basic spellcheck/grammar tools, you must include an AI Use Statement at the end of your submission.

Use this template:

AI Use Statement:
Tool(s) used: [Name/version if known]
What I used it for: [e.g., brainstormed keywords; edited grammar and clarity]
What I did NOT use it for: [e.g., generating original prose, arguments, or analysis]
Verification: I verified all factual claims and citations against primary sources.

Examples:

- "Used ChatGPT to suggest search terms for JSTOR and to edit grammar on my own draft. No AI-generated text was submitted verbatim."
- "Used Claude to summarize two PDFs I provided, then I wrote my own summaries after checking against the PDFs."

Failure to disclose AI use is treated as an academic integrity issue.

7) Source and fact-checking standards

You are responsible for:

- Verifying every factual claim with reliable sources.
- Providing real, retrievable citations for all sources.
- Quoting only from sources you personally accessed.
- Never citing an AI tool as a substitute for a scholarly source.

8) Violations

Potential outcomes include:

- Required revision with penalty
- A zero on the assignment
- Referral under the university academic integrity process
  Severity depends on intent, extent, and whether fabrication occurred.