

politics of the internet

This course will consider the possibility that we are beginning a new period in history in which information and collaboration will be more readily available than ever before. We will explore how new technologies do and do not change politics and society. Part of the story is looking at what people do with new media. This entails considering questions like ‘what is happening on *Facebook*?’ We will put *Facebook* and other Internet activities into a larger context by asking how they change and redistribute wealth and power. This raises additional questions about how entrepreneurs and firms make money from new technologies and, conversely, how others’ interests are hurt. This, in turn, leads us to inquiries about how potential winners and losers use political means to shape what technologies are introduced and what people are allowed to do with them, all the while keeping in mind questions about how the nature of politics is changed by new technologies. Key political questions involve how the boundaries of and access to the public and the private are being changed. Considering so many interlocking questions will inevitably leave us with many unanswered questions – which is not unexpected if we are indeed in the first years of a new era. But if we accept the premise that new technologies are changing what we know and how we know it, then all of these issues revolve around a single central question: ‘how are we changed by our use of new media?’ and even if we cannot find a clear answer, we will have the satisfaction of having squarely faced a central question of our times.

Assignments and Assessment

1. Literature reviews. (15%) Each student will submit eight 1-2 page papers responding to weekly readings. Due in class on the Thursday of the week when the reading is assigned.
2. Assignments: (10%) a) Each student will submit five one page papers explaining what they did and the results for weekly 'assignments' listed in the weekly schedule below. b) Each student is required to present at least one 'discovery of the week' during the appropriate class segment. 'Discoveries' can be anything that is clever, elegant, useful or funny and can be 'new' to the world or the student. Presentations should not last more than 2-3 minutes.
3. Group Project Proposal (20%). Each student will write a five page proposal for a group project and present it to the class. Projects may involve research, community service or many other possibilities, but must involve an opportunity to learn about the Internet or new media as a key component. Proposals should include a description of the project, an explanation of why it is interesting and important (including references to readings and/or lectures), and a description of what resources will be required. The key criterion for evaluating project proposals will be their potential to create opportunities for learning about the nature of the Internet and how it can be used effectively. Whether or not your project is approved by the instructor and attracts the needed participants will be considered in its evaluation. Due March 5.
4. Group project (20%). All students will join a group to implement one of the proposed projects. Each group will write a five page paper or create an equivalent web page explaining what they did and what they learned and present their results to the class during the last week of class.
5. Term web page or paper. (20%) (no more than 7 pages). Write a term paper on an aspect of the Internet *or* evaluate a sci fi novel or movie in which networks or computers are a central theme and which takes up issues discussed in class or in the literature on the Internet and new media.
6. Class Participation (15%). As this is a seminar-style class, students' critical engagement in class discussion is important. This requires: regular attendance and preparing readings and assignments and being ready to discuss them and completing readings in a timely manner. Following relevant current events and bringing them to the classes attention may also help.

notes

Information and updates regarding course requirements and scheduling may be sent to the email account listed on D2L. Students who miss deadlines will only be allowed to make-up the work if the circumstances are truly exceptional, tragic and/or beyond their control. Some leniency may be shown if problems are discussed in advance. Regular attendance is expected as specified by university policy and failure to attend regularly may be sanctioned as specified by university policy. Academic dishonesty may receive the harshest sanctions allowed by university policy. Students who would like to improve their grade may do extra assignments or revise their papers, but must first consult with the instructor. Students seeking honors credit and graduate students will be required to complete additional assignments and should consult with the instructor.

Tentative schedule of topics and readings:

Texts marked with an asterisk (*) are recommended. All others are required. This is a tentative list. Revisions may be announced in class or by email.

1. Introduction Jan. 15 & 17
 Zizi Papacharissi, "The Virtual Sphere: The Internet as a Public Sphere" *New Media and Society* 4(1):9–27.
 Douglas Rushkoff, *Program or Be Programmed: Ten Commands for a Digital Age* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2010), 7-27.
2. Technological Determinism Jan. 22 & 24
Assignment: Talk to someone who is at least a generation older or younger than you. Ask about what they do with and how they think of computers and the Internet.
 Lawrence Lessig, "Code is Law" in *Code: Version 2.0* (NY: Basic Books, Inc., 2006) pp1-8
[\[http://codev2.cc/download+remix/Lessig-Codev2.pdf\]](http://codev2.cc/download+remix/Lessig-Codev2.pdf).
 Langdon Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" from *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986) 19-39.
 *Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
3. History of Media Jan. 29 & 31
 "Tim Wu on The Master Switch," 11 January 11, Berkman Center for Internet and Society,
[\[http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/events/luncheon/2011/01/wu\]](http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/events/luncheon/2011/01/wu).
 *Tim Wu, *The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).
 Paul Starr, *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications* (NY: Basic Books, Inc., 2004) 23-46, *47-152, 153-90, 327-47.
 *Susan Crawford, *Captive Audience: The Telecom Industry Monopoly Power in the New Gilded Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
4. History of Computers & the Internet Feb. 5 & 7
 Johnny Ryan, *A History of the Internet and the Digital Future* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010) 11-104.
 John Perry Barlow, "A Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace." (1996)
[\[http://homes.eff.org/~barlow/Declaration-Final.html\]](http://homes.eff.org/~barlow/Declaration-Final.html).
 *Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
5. Collective Action Feb. 12 & 14
Wikipedia
Assignment: Locate an interesting and/or controversial Wikipedia page. Examine the recent history of edits. Make an edit. Check to see what happens.
 Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Nations: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom* (New

Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) *1-34, 35-58, *59-127.

[http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/wealth_of_networks/Main_Page#Read_the_book].

Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations* (NY: Penguin Press, 2008) esp. *1-54, 143-60.

Jonathan Michael Reagle, Jr., *Good Faith Collaboration: The Culture of Wikipedia* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010) 45-72.

*Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

6. Fragmentation **Blogging** Feb. 19 & 21

Assignment: Find a blog or web site promoting an extreme or absurd point of view (or for that matter one that is not so weird). Check out some of the sites that it links to or which link to it. Can you find loops?

*Jonathan Kay, *Among the Truthers: A Journey Through America's Growing Conspiracist Underground* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011) 227-60.

*Cass R. Sunstein, "Believing False Rumors," in Saul Levmore and Martha C. Nussbaum (eds.), *The Offensive Internet: Speech, Privacy and Reputation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010) 91-106.

Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011) 1-20, 217-43.

Markus Prior, *Post-Broadcast Democracy: How Media Choice Increases Inequality in Political Involvement and Polarizes Elections* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 255-88.

Aaron Barlow, *The Rise of the Blogosphere* (Westport, Cn: Praeger, 2008) 165-84.

*Robert W. McChesney and Victor Pickard (eds.), *Will the Last Reporter Please Turn Out the Lights: The Collapse of Journalism and What Can Be Done to Fix It* (New York: New Press, 2011).

7. Intellectual Property **Pirate Bay/Losers** Feb. 26 & 28

Assignment: Talk to a couple of friends about how they obtain music. Why do they use or not use peer-to-peer services?

James Boyle, *The Public Domain: Enclosing the Commons of the Mind* (New Haven: Yale, 2008) 17-41, 83-121 [<http://www.thepublicdomain.org/download/>].

Matthew David, *Peer to Peer and the Music Industry: The Criminalization of Sharing* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009) 29-41, 96-117, *144-60.

*Steve Knopper, *Appetite for Self-Destruction: The Spectacular Crash of the Record Industry in the Digital Age* (NY: Free Press, 2009), 113-57.

*Lewis Hyde, *Common As Air: Revolution, Art and Ownership* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010).

8. Project Proposals March 5 & 7

Spring Break

March 10-17

9. Privacy & Surveillance **Facebook** March 19 & 21

Assignment: Review the privacy settings for your Facebook account. What are you sharing with whom?

David Kirkpatrick, *The Facebook Effect: The Inside Story of the Company that is Connecting the World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010) 1-19, 199-215, 256-74.

Daniel J. Solove "I've Got Nothing to Hide" and Other Misunderstandings of Privacy" 44 *San Diego L. Rev.* 745-72 2007.

Kate Raynes-Goldie, "Aliases, Creeping, and Wall Cleaning: Understanding Privacy in the Age of Facebook," *First Monday* 15:1 (4 January 2010) [[here](#)].

*Jeff Jarvis, *Public Parts* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011).

Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 2011) 1-20.

10. Crime & Security March 26

Assignment: Offer to give a few of your friends or whomever a free pen (to be provided by the instructor) if they will give you the password for their MU email, Gmail or Facebook account.

Mark Bowden, *Worm: The First Digital World War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2011) 26-120.

*Brett Stone-Gross et al, "The Underground Economy of Spam: A Botmaster's Perspective of Coordinating Large-Scale Spam Campaigns" 4th USENIX Workshop on Large-Scale Exploits and Emergent Threats (LEET), USENIX. USA, March 2011 [<http://iseclab.org/papers/cutwail-LEET11.pdf>].

*Information Warfare Monitor & Shadowserver Foundation, SHADOWS IN THE CLOUD: Investigating Cyber Espionage 2.0 (April 2010) JR03-2010 [<http://shadows-in-the-cloud.net>].

*Bryce G. Westlake, Martin Bouchard and Richard Frank "Finding the Key Players in Online Child Exploitation Networks" *Policy and Internet* 3:2 (2011).

*Bruce Schneier, *Liars and Outliers: Enabling the Trust that Society Needs to Thrive* (Malden, MA: John Wiley and Sons, 2012).

Easter Holiday

March 28-April 1

11. American Politics **Campaign 2.0** April 2 & 4

Daniel Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back: The Crafting of Networked Politics from Howard Dean to Barack Obama* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 3-60, *121-54, .155-87.

*David Karpf, *The MoveOn Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy* (*Oxford Studies in Digital Politics*) (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Easter Holiday

12. Authoritarian Politics **Arab Spring or China?** April 9 & 11

Rebecca MacKinnon, *Consent of the Networked: The Worldwide Struggle for Internet Freedom* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 2012), 31-50.

Philip N. Howard and Muzammil M. Hussain, "The Upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia: The Role of Digital Media" *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 22, Number 3, July 2011, pp. 35-48.

*Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011).

13. Regulating the Internet April 16 & 18

Jonathan Zittrain, "Protecting the Internet Without Wrecking It: How to Meet the Security Threat" *Boston Review* (March/April 2008) [<http://bostonreview.net/BR33.2/zittrain.php>].

Rebecca MacKinnon, *Consent of the Networked: The Worldwide Struggle for Internet Freedom* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 2012), 75-98, 115-30, 149-68.

*Andy Greenberg, *This Machine Kills Secrets: How WikiLeaks, Cypherpunks, and Hacktivists Aim to Free the World's Information* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012).

14. Conclusions April 23 & 25

TBD

15. Project Reports April 30 & May 2

Final Papers Due: Wednesday, May 8 at 3:00 pm

Learning objectives for this class: 1) Gain an understanding of how media in general and the Internet in particular have shaped politics; 2) Gain an understanding of the major issues involved in regulating the Internet; 3) Become more effective at finding and evaluating information and ideas found on the Internet; 4) Improve liberal arts skills of critical thinking, research, and communication.