

Political Science 4614

Senior Seminar in International Relations

The Internet and Politics

Fall 2015

Course Info

Instructor: Steven Wilson

Place: Rand 211

Time: Tuesdays 9:00AM - 11:50AM

Office Hours: by appointment in the Major Williams 119A

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Course Objectives

The Internet and the rise of new communications technologies over the last generation has irrevocably changed the nature of communication. This course explores the effects of the Internet on politics and society. It begins with a study of what the Internet is and how it works, and moves on to what immediate implications it has had with regard to transaction costs and collective action problems. In addition, the course covers issues of Internet governance and institutions, the rise of the global network economy, and the effects of the Internet on social identity. Contemporaneous events and issues such as the Arab Spring, the digital divide, Wikileaks, and cyberwarfare are each covered in detail.

Textbooks

The course has five required text books:

Blum, Andrew: *Tubes: A Journey to the Center of the Internet*

Castells, Manuel: *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*

Morozov, Evgeny: *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*

Shirky, Clay: *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations*

Wu, Tim: *The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires*

Assignments & Grading

Reading will be assigned for each class. Students should come to class having read the assigned material and being ready to discuss it. Please schedule a meeting with me if you have any trouble understanding the material, or if you have any questions about the course at all as the semester progresses.

Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation, writing, and a final research paper. The proportion each of these is worth to the final grade is 33%.

Class Participation and Discussion

As this is a seminar class, participation and discussion are essential to the learning process. Students should come to each class having done all the reading, and actively participating in each and every class.

In addition, for each class, several students will serve as “discussants”, responsible for leading class discussion. Each student will serve as discussant three times over the course of the semester.

Finally, the final two weeks of classes are reserved for research project presentations. Each student will formally present their research to the class.

Writing

Every week that reading is assigned, students will be required to turn in a 500 word summary and synthesis of that week’s reading. As part of doing so, each student will include at the end two discussion questions for use in class discussion. These assignments are called “Discussion Briefs” and are due at 5pm each Monday on Scholar.

Research Project

The final papers will be written in stages over the course of the semester. In the first two weeks of the semester, students will identify a research question they want to answer appropriate to the course’s subject matter, turn in a summary of the question and their approach to it, and generate a reading list for the semester. Over the course of the semester, students will produce two “milestone” drafts, which should be 1000 and 2000 words, respectively. These are early (and likely incomplete) drafts of the final paper, that will benefit from professor feedback and suggestions.

The final version of the paper will be 2500 words in length and due by 5pm on Friday, December, 11th.

When grading the final paper, if a student writes less than the minimum length, the paper will be graded out of the percent of the assignment that was written. For example, a 2000 word paper will be graded out of 80%.

Course Schedule

The schedule for the semester is listed below, along with the assigned readings for that week.

Week 1: Tue, Aug 25

INTRODUCTION

Week 2: Tue, Sept 1

Topic: What is the Internet?

Readings: Andrew Blum, *Tubes*

Week 3: Tue, Sept 8

Topic: Effects of the first generation.

Readings: Farrell, *Consequences of the Internet for Politics*

Castells, *Rise of Network Society* (Chapter 1)

Columbia Journalism Review, *Overload*

Elton and Carey, *The Prehistory of the Internet*

Thelwall, *Society on the Web*

Sandvig, *The Internet as Infrastructure*

Week 4: Tue, Sept 15

Topic: Communication and collective action.

Readings: Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*

Week 5: Tue, Sept 22

Topic: Governance and institutions.

Readings: Tim Wu, *The Master Switch*

Week 6: Tue, Sept 29

Topic: The Internet and democratic politics.

Readings: Vaccari *Digital Politics in Western Democracies*

Reedy and Wells, *Information, the Internet, and Direct Democracy*

Coleman, *Making Parliamentary Democracy Visible*

Margetts, *The Internet and Democracy*

Lilleker and Vedel, *The Internet in Campaigns and Elections*

Week 7: Tue, Oct 6

Topic: The surveillance state and its discontents.

Readings: Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion*

Week 8: Tue, Oct 13

Topic: The global network economy.

Readings: Castells, *The Rise of Network Society* (Chapters 2 and 3)

Week 9: Tue, Oct 20

Topic: Social identity and the Internet.

Readings: van Doorn and van Zoonen, *Theorizing Gender and the Internet*

Kim and Ball-Rokeach, *New Immigrants, the Internet, and Civil Society*

Musial and Kazienko, *Social Networks on the Internet*

Bennet and Toft, *Transnational Activism and Social Networks*

van Dijk, *One Europe, Digitally Divided*

Wheeler, *Internet Use and Political Identity in the Arab World*

Week 10: Tue, Oct 27

Topic: Cyberwarfare.

Readings: Chapple and Seidl, *Cyberwarfare* (Chapters 7 and 15)

Mueller, *Networks and States* (Chapter 8)

Week 11: Tue, Nov 3

Topic: Color Revolutions and the Arab Spring.

Readings: Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope*

Week 12: Tue, Nov 10

Topic: Dictators and the Internet.

Readings: Sun, *Internet Policy in China* (Chapter 1)

Wilson, *How to Control the Internet*

Week 13: Tue, Nov 17

Topic: The future of the Internet and politics.

Readings: Howard and Chadwick, *Political Omnivores and Wired States*

Gershensfeld and Vasseur, *As Objects Go Online*

Castells, *The Rise of Network Society* (Chapters 7 and 8)

Week 14: Tue, Nov 24

THANKSGIVING

Week 15: Tue, Dec 1

PRESENTATIONS

Week 16: Tue, Dec 8

PRESENTATIONS