
IS406B Course Description

IS 406B – Politics of Cyberspace

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1 Course Description

As computing and networking technologies increasingly pervade the worlds of business, government, science, law enforcement, the military and entertainment, political and policy considerations also increase in importance as the Internet reaches an ever-greater portion of humanity. Highly controversial subjects involving government actions, legal theory, ethical judgements, international relations, and economic analysis are introduced with reference not only to historical developments of the last several decades but also to recent news reports. The course assumes only a rudimentary familiarity with the basic concepts and terminology of modern Internet usage and computing and is not a technology-focused course. This course offers students from all majors the opportunity to explore policy issues in greater depth than in technology-oriented courses they may have taken. Information-technology courses are not a prerequisite and students from all majors are welcome.

Prerequisites: Open only to juniors and seniors. (3 Credits)

2 Goals and Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to present summaries and intelligent arguments about the facts, the issues, the players and the costs and benefits involved in key political debates about topics such as the following and others that develop through discussion in the course:

- To what degree did predictions about the future of technology in the 1950s come true?
- What's the difference between a paradigm shift in technology and a refinement?
- How does science fiction play a role in technological change?
- Who funds technological change?
- Do wars play a critical role in stimulating technology change?
- What factors are common to technological failures?
- How do mass media influence technological change?
- What factors account for different types of resistance to technological change?
- What is the digital divide and what should/can we do about it?
- What are the interrelations of technology and work?
- What are the implications of technology for social networking?
- How does technology affect the behavior and role of government?
- How does government affect the development and use of technology?
- How does technology change children from generation to generation?
- What are the pros and cons of technology in medicine and science?
- How is technology affecting the arts?
- How do digital natives differ from previous generations in their (your!) concepts of identity?
- What changes in conceptions of privacy are being documented as digital natives grow up?
- What are some of the safety issues surrounding Internet usage?
- How is modern technology influencing creativity?
- What are some of the conflicts in moral values developing between digital natives and older people?

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- What is disintermediation and how is it affecting the reliability of published / posted information?
- What are the facts about Internet addiction?
- Is there cause to worry about violence in virtual space prompting violence in realspace?
- How are digital natives influencing business practices?
- How are educators coping with new learning strategies among their students?
- What are electronic grass roots?
- What's the history of debit and credit cards?
- How do criminal hackers exploit the credit-card industry to steal money?
- Where do computer viruses and worms come from – and how are they changing?
- What is the banking industry doing wrong in terms of protecting its customers against fraud?
- How do international crime rings exploit the Internet to steal from their victims?
- What can you and your family and friends do to reduce the chances of becoming victims of identity theft and bank fraud?

3 Mechanics

3.1 Classes will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 08:00:03 to 09:14:57 in Dewey 108. Attendance is mandatory; a record of attendance will be kept. More than two unexcused absences will result in expulsion from the course with an F grade. See §0 below for more details.

3.2 Textbooks:

- Harrington, J. L. (2009). *Technology and Society*. Jones and Bartlett (ISBN 978-0-7637-5094-7). 294 pp. Index. \$57.95 (Amazon <http://www.amazon.com/Technology-Society-Jan-Harrington/dp/0763750948>)
- Palfrey, J. & U. Gasser (2008). *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives*. Basic Books (ISBN 0-465-00515-2). 288 pp. \$17.13 (Amazon <http://www.amazon.com/Born-Digital-Understanding-Generation-Natives/dp/0465005152>)
- Acohido, B. & J. Swartz (2008). *Zero Day Threat: The Shocking Truth of How Banks and Credit Bureaus Help Cyber Crooks Steal Your Money and Identity*. Union Square Press (ISBN: 1-402-75695-X). 304 pp. \$13.57 (Amazon <http://www.amazon.com/Zero-Day-Threat-Shocking-Identity/dp/140275695X>)

3.3 Methods of Assessment

3.3.1 Preliminary Written Assignment: 5% of final grade

Students will write a 750-word research paper on an assigned topic to be submitted by the end of the third week of class. This essay will provide an opportunity for detailed commentary and correction that will support better research and writing of the term paper.

3.3.2 Leading a Class Section : 15% of final grade

Students will take charge of guiding class discussion for one of the topics in a class session by arrangement with the instructor. Each student will introduce the topic, summarize key points, and lead discussion during half the class period. Grading will include the depth of knowledge of the speaker and the quality of the class discussion engendered by the student lecturer. Students will be responsible for preparing detailed discussion questions for distribution to the class at the start of their period.

3.3.3 Term paper: 25% of final grade

Students will write a 4,000-5,000 word research paper on a suitable topic to be selected in conjunction with the instructor. The topic is to be approved on or before the end of the 4th week of the course. The outline is to be submitted on or before the 6th week of the course. The first draft is due on or before the 10th week of the course. The final draft is due by the 14th week of the course. Late

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submissions for any of these steps will result in reduction of grades by 1 point per day from the total score allotted.

3.3.4 Quizzes: 20% of final grade

There will be FOUR in-class, CLOSED-book quizzes involving multiple-choice questions, and short-answer questions to be completed in 10 minutes.

3.3.5 Mid-term exam: 15% of final grade

OPEN-book 75-minute exam on Thursday 4 March 2010 that may include multiple-choice, short-answer, short-essay and blank-paper questions.

3.3.6 Final exam: 15% of final grade

The final exam will be a OPEN-book essay exam with three blank-paper questions asking students to formulate the key insights they have derived from each of the three texts they have studied during this course. Points will be given for clarity, thoroughness, and insightfulness of the responses, which will have a minimum of 500 words per answer. Students will not be permitted to quote the texts or any other source material – all of the writing must be entirely personal and result from introspection and thought.

3.3.7 Term-Paper Presentation: 5% of final grade

Students will present their term-paper topic in class in a short lecture. Time allotted will depend on the number of students in the class. Students may speak with or without audiovisual aids. Grading will include the quality of the content and of the class discussion led by the speaker.

3.3.8 Participation in Moodle Discussions

Students may participate in online discussions in the Moodle classroom devoted to this course. The instructor will assign up to 2 points of extra credit to be added to the overall quiz score for each valuable contribution to the discussions. Good postings include pointers to and analysis of news articles and analytical discussions of topics appropriate to the class.

3.3.9 Extra Written Assignments

Students can submit extra assignments such as book reviews, summaries of interesting articles, and so on. These will contribute points to the total **quiz score** and can compensate for less-than-perfect grades on required assignments, quizzes and exams. No more than one extra-credit assignment per week is permitted but there is no limit to the word-count. The point-score will be calculated using a ratio of up to 1 extra point per 50 words. No extra-credit assignments are accepted in May.

4 Cheating and Plagiarism

Students are graded on an individual basis and must therefore complete their own work. Students are reminded of the University's Policy against cheating and plagiarism < <http://www.norwich.edu/about/policy/academic/appendix1.html> >. Ignorance of the University's Rules is not a valid defense against accusations of academic dishonesty. If in doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism, ask before submitting assignments. Instances of cheating and of plagiarism will be reported to the Academic Integrity Committee. Penalties include expulsion from the University.

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5 Attendance Policy – no more than 2 unexcused absences

University regulations stipulate that “Unless stated otherwise, the maximum number of permitted absences is the number of times the course meets per week. When the student has reached the maximum number of permitted absences, the faculty member will warn the student of impending dismissal from class with a grade of ‘F.’ This warning letter will include the course number and section and dates(s) of absence(s). The letter will state that any future unexcused absences may result in recommendation to the Vice President of Academic Affairs through the course School Dean that the student be dismissed from the class with a grade of ‘F.’ A copy of the warning letter will go to the student’s academic advisor and to the Commandant and Vice President of Student Affairs.”

6 Additional Notes

- Students are expected to read the assigned readings before coming to class, discuss them in class, and then to review them after the class.
- There will be no *grading on a curve*. There are no predetermined numbers of final letter grades.
- Students are encouraged to study together but may not collaborate during exams. Students are individually responsible for all assigned readings, lecture, and discussion material.

7 About your Instructor < <http://www.mekabay.com/cv> >.

Contact information: < <http://www.mekabay.com/contact> >

