
IS407 Course Description

IS 407 – 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.

All specifics of topics, schedule and deadlines are in the IS407 Syllabus.

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:

- History and geography of cyberspace
- Governance of cyberspace and 'Net Neutrality
- The Digital Divide
- Evolving concepts of social interactions & privacy in the age of social networks
- School & employer reactions to information posted on the 'Net
- Virtual worlds (games and places)
- Arguments over intellectual property laws
- Disintermediation and the future of knowledge: books, newspapers, magazines, music and film
- Politics & cyberspace: social networking, Twitter, mobile phones & the Web in politics in the USA and the world
- Information warfare today
- Artificial intelligence, neural interfaces & the Borg

3 MECHANICS

- 3.1 Classes will meet as stipulated in the syllabus. Attendance is mandatory; a record of attendance will be kept. More than three unexcused absences will result in expulsion from the course with an F grade. See §□ o below for more details.
- 3.2 Readings, videos, and sound recordings (required and optional) are listed in the weekly assignments on NUoodle and on the course pages on the instructor's Website.
- 3.3 Teaching materials are available through the classroom in NUoodle and on the course Web pages, which are < <http://www.mekabay.com/courses/academic/norwich/is407/index.htm> > or < <http://tinyurl.com/72kznzw> >.

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3.4 Students should read, listen to or view the assigned readings, audio recordings or videos before coming to class. See §4.1 below concerning in-class pre-tests.

3.5 Behavior in class

- Punctuality: The attendance sheet will be removed a few minutes after class begins. Anyone not signing the sheet will be rated as absent.
- Computers and smart phones are permitted in class because they can be helpful in looking into questions spontaneously as topics arise in class discussions. Some students like to research a topic on the Web to contribute during discussions.
- However, if students insist on wasting their time and money by texting, sexting, instant-messaging, hacking, writing code, watching videos, reading novels, studying texts for other courses, and writing essays for other courses, it's their problem, not the instructor's, as long as they don't bother anyone.
- Anyone found to be using their computer in a way that distracts other students will be expelled from the class and marked as absent.

4 METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

4.1 Planned & Randomly Scheduled In-class Tests: 15% of final grade

- Closed book short-answer quizzes testing for concepts, technical vocabulary, problems and recommendations will be completed weekly on Mondays. Each weekly quiz will be associated with the specific assigned readings for the *previous* single week with questions pertaining to different chapters intermixed at random.
- The instructor will randomly pick several Monday quizzes to impose additional questions about fundamentally important concepts and terminology presented in the readings in *that* week's assignment without warning.
 - E.g., in a week discussion disintermediation, a question might be "What is a key disadvantage of disintermediation in access to factual information?" Answer: lack of trustworthiness.
 - This strategy is intended to encourage students to read – or at least scan – the assigned readings before they come to class so we can have intelligent discussions with everyone instead of limiting conversation to only a few dedicated students.

4.2 Online Discussions: 10% of final grade

Students will respond to questions posted in the online discussions for each week in NUoodle. Each student is expected to contribute a thoughtful comment about the issues raised using reason and evidence to support their point of view; postings consisting of "I agree" and "Yeah, right" will not be penalized, but they won't earn points, either. The instructor will grant extra points for contributions that present new ideas, which point to interesting information on the Web or in the Kreitzberg Library databases, and which comment articulately on issues or arguments already presented. The discussion grading will close two weeks after they open at the start of each week; i.e., the discussions for any given week will be graded from the start of that period and end on the second Sunday after the start. However, the discussion forums themselves will remain open until the end of the course.

4.3 Mid-term Essay Exam: 10% of final grade

The mid-term *open-book take-home* essay exam will include

- Two serious,
- 500-word (minimum 450 words, no maximum) messages
- responding to realistic questions raised by ordinary people such as family members or friends without a technical background
- querying a student about cyberspace issues discussed in the first course

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- The questions will be distributed before the final grade due-date and submitted electronically via NUoodle in accordance with the schedule listed in the syllabus.
- Grading criteria for the essay exam are listed in the document “memo-type_exam_grading_rubric” provided via NUoodle and the course pages of the instructor’s class Website.

4.4 Final Essay Exam: 20% of final grade

The final *open-book take-home* essay exam will include four questions and otherwise conform to the description of the mid-term essay exam (§4.2).

4.5 Term Paper: 20% of final grade

- Students will write research paper of a **minimum of 3,500** words on a suitable topic relating to the management of information assurance and to be selected or refined in conjunction with the instructor. There is no upper limit on the word count.
 - The focus of the course is political implications of communications technology, not details of the technology itself or of law enforcement or business in the narrow sense. Examples of suitable topics are provided on NUoodle and on the class Website. Topics such as “New Developments in High-Speed Communications” or “Enforcement of the DMCA” are unacceptable topics whereas “Political Implications of New Developments in High-Speed Communications” or “Political Activism Against Copyright Laws” would be acceptable.
 - Students must avoid choosing topics that are so broad that they would require writing an entire textbook for reasonable coverage. Thus “The Effects of Computers on Privacy” or “The World of Virtual Reality” are unacceptable topics. However, “Recent Research on the Human Responses to the Credibility of AI Personalities” or “Evolving Concepts of Privacy among Users of Social Networks” would be acceptable.
 - Topics that are so specific to a particular technology that they show no evidence of generalizability are unacceptable. For example, “Buffer Overflows in C++ Programs” or “Evaluating Effects of Ionizing Radiation from Mobile Devices” are unacceptably narrow. In contrast, “The Role of Hactivists in the _____ Controversy” or “Trusting the Wiki: The Case of Paul Revere and the Sarah Palin Supporters” would be fine.
 - Topics must be submitted by the deadline using NUoodle to add the selection to the topics discussion group, not by e-mail, to ensure a submission receipt.
 - The topic must be approved in writing by the instructor by or before the deadline noted in the syllabus. Students are welcome to speak with the instructor before or after class or using e-mail, Skype or phone to discuss their choice of topic.
 - Topics must be submitted by the deadline using NUoodle to add the selection to the topics discussion group, not by e-mail, to ensure a submission receipt.
 - The topic must be approved in writing by the instructor by or before the deadline noted in the syllabus. Students are welcome to speak with the instructor before or after class or using e-mail, Skype or phone to discuss their choice of topic.
- *Failure to received written approval* of a topic will result in considering the essay a supplementary work graded at up to one point per 500 words (i.e., a maximum of four points towards the final grade instead of up to 20 points).
- Students are welcome to discuss their drafts with the professor in his office by appointment or by walking in or via Skype (not phone) as possible *up to the date indicated in the syllabus*.
- The essay format *must conform to the requirements* in the “Term-Paper Guidelines” accessible via NUoodle or on the instructor’s Website.
- Essays with fewer than the minimum allowable number of words will be penalized as a function of the word count; thus a 2,000 word paper rated as achieving 90% in quality would receive a 51% grade ($90\% * 2,000/3,500$) in the final-grade calculations for the course.

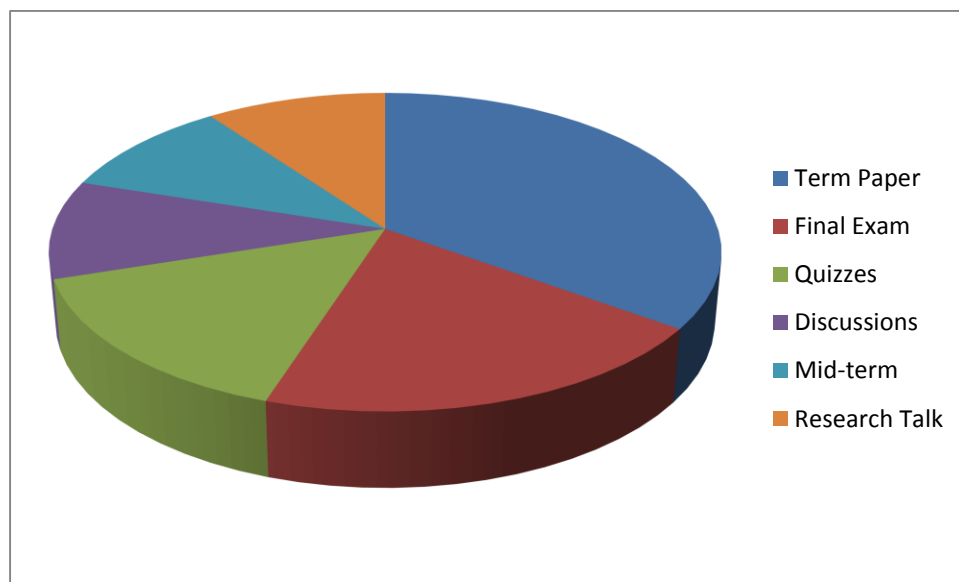
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- The final draft is due electronically using NUoodle (not e-mail) by the deadline listed in the syllabus; NUoodle provides proof of submission. Late submissions for any of these steps will result in subtraction of 10 percentage points per day or part of a day of delay from the 100% total score for the essay.
- **Essays for which there were delays in approval of topic or submission of the final version may thus achieve a zero grade even for perfect work if the total number of days of delay is 10 or more.**
- Grading criteria for the term papers are listed in the document “Term-Paper Guidelines” provided via NUoodle and the course pages of the instructor’s Website.

4.6 Term-Paper Presentation: 10% of final grade

Students will present their term-paper topic in class in a short formal lecture or informal discussion. Time allotted will depend on the number of students in the class. Students may speak with or without audiovisual aids. Students are encouraged to discuss their proposed presentation or notes with the instructor before their presentation. Grading will focus on the interest of the ideas and resources presented, the clarity of the student’s presentation and on the quality of the discussion prompted by the student among the class members.

The pie-chart below shows the distribution of components for the final grade:



4.7 Optional Extra Points Opportunities

4.7.1 Additional Class Presentations: up to maximum of additional 20 points on total quiz grade

Students may volunteer to be in charge of parts of a class lecture /discussion on a topic selected through discussion with the instructor. Grading will include the depth of knowledge of the speaker and the quality of the class discussion engendered by the student lecturer. One 20 minute lecture will be granted up to five additional grade points on the quiz grade.

4.7.2 Participation in NUoodle Discussions: up to maximum of additional 40 points on total quiz grade

- Students are *required* to subscribe to and *encouraged* to contribute to online discussions in the NUoodle classroom devoted to this course.

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- The instructor will assign up to 1 point 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.
- *Mid-term and final multiple-choice exams* may include questions based on postings to the online discussions.

4.7.3 **Writing Extra-credit Papers:** up to maximum of additional 40 points on total quiz score

- Extra-credit papers on any suitable topic (e.g., a review of an interesting professional article or scholarly paper, a roundup of recent news on a specific topic, a speculative piece about implications or future developments in an aspect of appropriate technology) are welcomed
- Each extra-credit paper can be assigned up to 1 point per 50 words depending on quality of the submission.
- Thus a 1,000 word essay of excellent quality could contribute 20 points to the overall quiz grade.

5 **CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM**

- Students are graded on an individual basis and must therefore complete their own work.
- Students are encouraged to study together but may not collaborate during exams.
- However, students are *encouraged* to form study groups to review for quizzes and to collaborate on papers (not exams) by reading each other's drafts and making constructive suggestions for improvement. It is not necessary to document such collaboration.
- 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, consult the instructor before submitting assignments.
 - Instances of cheating and of plagiarism will be reported to the Academic Integrity Committee. Penalties include expulsion from the University.

6 **ATTENDANCE POLICY – NO MORE THAN 3 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.”

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7 ADDITIONAL NOTES

- Students are expected to read the assigned readings before coming to class, discuss them in class, and then to review them and delve into the materials in more depth after the class.
- The instructor will avoid *Death by PowerPoint*. Class sessions will be centered on discussion, with some videos or other recordings to enliven the material and prompt animated exchanges of views.
- Review questions will be made available. These sample questions will not limit the scope of actual exam questions, and are merely intended for review and for exam preparation.
- Students are encouraged to study together but may not collaborate during exams.
- Students are encouraged to collaborate in preparing in-class lectures; the points will be divided between or among the participating lecturers.
- By University regulations, no student may submit work that has been submitted for a grade in another class without written permission from the receiving professor.
- There will be no *grading on a curve*. There are no predetermined numbers of final letter grades. Students are *not in competition with each other* – everyone is encouraged to collaborate in study groups.

8 ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR < <http://www.mekabay.com/cv> >.