GOVT 490 011: Net Neutrality and Regulation
Fall 2019
Friday, 10:30am-1:10pm
IN 316

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Office Hours: 8-10:20am Friday, 10-noon Wednesday Location TBA

Description of the Course
Today’s global information economy is built on a “free and open internet,” while increasingly relying on data aggregation to fuel technological advances and industry revenue generation. The ability to collect, store, and process huge amounts of data and information opens exciting new capabilities that can improve standards of living and organizational productivity. New technology can also improve the effectiveness of national security and intelligence programs. At the same time, important questions of privacy, freedom and equity are at stake and many existing policy structures are not equipped to deal with the data revolution.

This course is a seminar in technology policy, with a focus on the roles of government and industry in the rapid developments in information and communication technology. The class will review the economics of innovation and networks before tackling major issues in technology regulation in the U.S. and around the world. We will consider legal, economic, sociologic and moral perspectives in our discussions of the new worlds of data, networks, surveillance, sharing, and hackers.

Note: This is a seminar course. Enrolled students are encouraged to suggest topics not currently on the syllabus.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Use the basic tools and vocabulary of microeconomic theory as it relates to new technologies and public policy
- Compare regulatory frameworks at national and local levels as it relates to the telecommunication and privacy
- Analyze the impacts of algorithms, social networks and engagement economies on culture, elections and markets
- Identify the major issues surrounding national intelligence use of data mining
Course Requirements

Course Grade Breakdown

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>30%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rapid Response Reports</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 48 hour report</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>- Full class report</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>- 90 minute report</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debate</td>
<td>25%</td>
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Participation

This is a seminar style course, and you are expected to participate in class. Class participation is based on in-class discussions, scheduled student presentations, and online discussions. We all have different styles of participating and contributing to group knowledge generation, but do not expect to mentally check out of class while refreshing baseball scores and email for three hours (the occasional glance is fine); I notice and so does everyone else.

Rapid Response Report

There will be three brief writing assignments scheduled through the semester. You will be asked to write a report (or memo) on a current topic that will not be shared in advance, and base your answers on material covered in the course. The reports are meant to be brief – a maximum of one page. You are expected to use all resources at your disposal, so bring a laptop (or sit in the computer lab), and be prepared to think and write fast. The assignments will have progressively shorter turnaround times: the first is due within 48 hours, the second is due during the class period and the final memo is due within ninety minutes.

Thinking critically and writing well under pressure is very difficult. I will be as forgiving as your boss would be in a similar situation. I recommend swapping policy memos with a classmate and/or reserving time before the deadline for intense copyediting.

Debates

Each student will participate in a debate on a relevant topic. (Note the terms of the debates depend on the number of registered students; the debates will either be against me, against a fellow student, or in teams of students.)

You will be able to sign up for your preferred topics, but I will randomly assign sides of the debate; in other words, I will randomly choose the teams debating for the resolved and against. We will discuss the format of the debates in class, and the grading rubric I will use.
Policy on Plagiarism
The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the School of Public Policy. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas presented as one’s own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one’s professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the School of Public Policy takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the SPP policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The SPP policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.

Academic Accommodation for a Disability
If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.
Note: Readings (especially second half) still in flux

Schedule

1. August 30
   *Introduction; Should the Internet be Regulated? How? The Economics of Information*
   
   Exponent Podcast Episode 168: A Community of Loonies

2. September 6
   *Regulation of Telecommunication; Net Neutrality, FCC*
   
   Intelligence Squared Debates. Preserve Net Neutrality: All Data is Created Equal, April 17, 2018
   
   
   How to Regulate the Internet, The Federalist Society
   
   FCC. Chairman Wheeler’s Proposal to Give Broadband Consumers Increased Choice, Transparency and Security With Respect to their Data. March 10, 2016.

3. September 13
   *Consumer Data; The Economics of Privacy; Price Discrimination*
   
   
   Podcast: Speaking Publicly about Privacy, Federal Reserve Board of Atlanta
   
   
   
   
   
   Tanner. *Different Customers, Different Prices, Thanks to Big Data*. Forbes. March 26, 2014. (see also WSJ 12/24/12 “Websites Vary Prices, Deals”)


White House Blog, Big Risks, Big Opportunities: The Intersection of Big Data and Civil Rights. May 4, 2016


4. September 20

*Privacy Law in the U.S., Europe and Beyond, GDPR*


European Commission, Court of Justice “Right to be Forgotten”

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/data-protection/

NHPR, The Exchange, July 14, 2014. *Should the US Adopt a “Right To Be Forgotten” Online?* Podcast available at NHPR.org


European Commission, Court of Justice “Right to be Forgotten”

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/data-protection/


NHPR, The Exchange, July 14, 2014. *Should the US Adopt a “Right To Be Forgotten” Online?* Podcast available at NHPR.org

“E.U.-U.S. Privacy Shield” European Commission, July 2016


5. September 27

*AI; Predictions, Machine Learning, Inequality*


Tegmark, Max. Benefits and Risks of Artificial Intelligence, Future of Life Institute.


Dietterick, Benefits and Risks of Artificial Intelligence, Medium.com, January 22, 2016.


**Rapid Response Report I due Tuesday Oct 2**

6. October 4  
*Social Networks and the First Amendment*


Bell, Emily. Facebook is Eating the World. Columbia Journalism Review. March 7 2016.


7. October 11  
*Social Networks and Radicalization, Elections and Foreign Influence*

8. October 18

**Rapid Response Report II**
No readings

9. October 25

*Monopolies and Anti Trust*
Regulating or Breaking up Big Tech: An Antitrust Explainer, MIT Technology Review, June 5 2019

10. November 1

*Government Surveillance and Search*
Intelligence innovations; Legal framework for surveillance; Domestic v. foreign intelligence gathering; Prism, Snowden, NSA, Encryption, Backdoors

Center for Democracy and Technology. The USA Freedom Act (HR 3361) Summary and Analysis. June 3, 2014. https://d1ovv0e9tw0h0c.cloudfront.net/files/2014/06/USA-FREEDOM-CDT-sum.pdf


President Obama, Press Conference on NSA Surveillance, August 9, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=paZgOC7Wqo0


11. November 8

*Smart Cities*

12. November 15

*Cybersecurity and Data Breaches*


Schneier on Security, How Security Companies Sucker Us with Lemons, Blog, April 19, 2007 (originally appeared in Wired)

13. November 22
   Diversity in the Tech Sector

Note: No Class November 29 (Thanksgiving)

14. December 6
   Rapid Response Report 3