**POGO 750: Social Media, Privacy and Innovation**  
Fall 2020  
Monday 7:20pm  
Online

Professor: Siona Robin Listokin-Smith (listed as Robin Smith)  
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Office: Founders Hall, 651  
Phone: (703)-993-9756  
Online Office Hours: Thursday 8-9pm (use Calendly)

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, public health 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, sociological, public health 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
POGO 750
Listokin Fall 2020

Course Requirements

This online seminar will be taught synchronously, and will depend on active participation in online video conference classes. The crux of the class consists of a healthy dose of weekly readings, class discussion and a series of short reports.

*Course Grade Breakdown*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid Response Reports</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- 48 hour report</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Full class report I</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Full class report II</td>
<td>20%</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 synchronous online class discussions and scheduled student presentations. 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 the news and email for three hours (the occasional glance is fine).

To facilitate participation, two students will be asked to kick off our discussion each week. Students will be given wide latitude in choosing their style of class leadership, including presenting the material formally, asking colleagues leading questions, introducing an additional relevant source and other formats.

*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 to 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 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 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.
## Schedule Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Deliverables</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>Readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>8/31 Finance of Privacy</td>
<td>Readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>9/14 Privacy Law in U.S., E.U. and Beyond</td>
<td>Readings, Discussion Leads</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>9/21 Social Networks and the 1st Amendment</td>
<td>Readings, Discussion Leads</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>9/28 First Rapid Response Report (No synchronous class this week)</td>
<td>Rapid Response Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>10/5 Online Radicalization</td>
<td>Readings, Discussion Leads, Debate</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>10/13 Elections and Fake News</td>
<td>Readings, Discussion Leads, Debate</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>10/19 Tech Monopolies and Anti-Trust</td>
<td>Readings, Discussion Leads, Debate</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>10/26 Regulation of Net Neutrality</td>
<td>Readings, Discussion Leads, Debate</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>11/2 A.I., Machine Learning and Public Policy</td>
<td>Readings, Discussion Leads, Debate</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>11/9 Government Surveillance</td>
<td>Readings, Discussion Leads, Debate</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>11/16 Cybersecurity and Data Breaches</td>
<td>Readings, Discussion Leads, Debate</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>11/23 Information and Inequality</td>
<td>Readings, Discussion Leads, Debate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. 11/30</td>
<td>Last Class</td>
<td>Rapid Response Report Due</td>
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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.
Schedule

1. August 24
   Introductions; Should the Internet be Regulated? How? The Economics of Information

   Podcast: Your Undivided Attention Episode I and II: What Happened In Vegas
   https://humanetech.com/podcast/

2. August 31
   Consumer Data; The Economics of Privacy; Price Discrimination

   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hgWie9dnssU


   https://www.wired.com/2008/06/pb-theory/


   http://blog.okcupid.com/index.php/we-experiment-on-human-beings/

   Tanner. Different Customers, Different Prices, Thanks to Big Data. Forbes. March 26, 2014. (see also WSJ 12/24/12 “Websites Vary Prices, Deals”)
   https://www.forbes.com/sites/adamtanner/2014/03/26/different-customers-different-prices-thanks-to-big-data/#6820f0215730

   https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/magazine/shopping-habits.html?mtrref=duckduckgo.com&gwh=32EEC6DC2BB68BBC3E9F2E294436C0BC&gwt=pay&assetType=PAYWALL

3. September 14 – NOTE NO CLASS ON SEPTEMBER 7

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


What is GDPR, the EU’s New Data Protection Law? [https://gdpr.eu/what-is-gdpr/](https://gdpr.eu/what-is-gdpr/)

Solove and Schwartz, An Overview of Privacy Law (excerpt from “Privacy Law Fundamentals”) 2015. IAPP Publication. [https://scholarship.law.gwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2424&context=faculty_publications](https://scholarship.law.gwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2424&context=faculty_publications)


4. September 21

*Social Networks, Copyright, Abuse and the First Amendment*


EFF. CDA 230. https://www.eff.org/issues/cda230


5. September 28

*Social Networks and Radicalization*

Exponent Podcast Episode 168: A Community of Loonies


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

6. October 5

*Social Networks, Elections, Fake News*


7. October 13 – NOTE CLASS WILL BE ON TUESDAY NIGHT

Monopolies and Anti Trust


8. October 19

Regulation of Telecommunication; Net Neutrality, FCC


How to Regulate the Internet, The Federalist Society
https://fedsoc.org/commentary/publications/how-to-regulate-the-internet

FCC. Chairman Wheeler’s Proposal to Give Broadband Consumers Increased Choice, Transparency and Security With Respect to their Data. March 10, 2016.

9. October 26

AI; Predictions, Machine Learning, Inequality

http://partiallyderivative.com/podcast/2016/05/25/machine-bias-interview


https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2016/05/03/preparing-future-artificial-intelligence

https://www.brookings.edu/blog/techtank/2019/02/12/assessing-trumps-artificial-intelligence-executive-order/

Kirchner, Lauren. When Discrimination is Baked into Algorithms. The Atlantic. September 6, 2015


10. November 2

Government Surveillance and Search – Readings still changing


Center for Democracy and Technology. The USA Freedom Act (HR 3361) Summary and Analysis. June 3, 2014. https://dlvv0c9tw0h0c.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=paZgOC7Wq00


11. November 9
*COVID-19, Technology and Public Health*
TBD

12. November 16
*Cybersecurity and Data Breaches – Readings Still Changing*


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

13. November 23
*Information and Inequality – Readings TBD*

14. November 30
*Last Class*