COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar examines various political themes and issues such as the politics of regulation and network architecture, the politics of piracy and hacking and the politics of grassroots activism. Students will interrogate a range of higher order political theories about democracy, liberalism and neoliberalism as they concern the intersection of technology and politics. Specific topics may include: domain name registration, ICAAN, filtering, tactical media, and open source software.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students will:

- be familiar with an array of political questions and tactics that emerge out of the use, invention, circulation, dissemination and production of networked technologies.
- grasp and specify a number of political theories about democracy, liberalism, social movements, and neoliberalism as they concern the politics of technology.
- differentiate between the various levels of politics we address as well as discuss their relationships to each other as we confront various examples and case studies
- identify how technology is at once imagined as an agent of political change and contrasts this with how these technologies work to enable and curtail various political possibilities.
- think more broadly about different levels and types of politic action and impacts, a framework that can be applied to non-digital contexts as well.

COURSE FORMAT, GENERAL REQUIREMENTS, & ATTENDANCE

This class will be run as a seminar and as indicated below, participation is not only required, but will count significantly toward your final grade. To aid in our discussion, you will be required to send at least one question to the whole class, at least 1.5 hours prior to class, engaging with the class readings. Every person will also be required to give a 20-25 minute presentation either on the history of the topic we are examining and/or on the chapters of the book we were not required to read. There are two writing assignments, one short one based on class reading and the other on a research paper of your own design. During our first class, I will provide more details on the paper topics and presentations.

GRADING

- Class Participation and Questions: 25%
- Presentation 15%
- Short Essay 15% (5-7 pages based on class readings)
- Final Research Paper: 45% (20-25 pages)
EVALUATION

SCHEDULE

Part One: Introductions and the Politics of Architecture and Governance

Week 1: Materiality in Politics

** During our first class we will introduce and explore the theoretical problematic and explore various models by which we can propose the politics of digital media and start to discuss how to approach the differences and similarities between the three types of politics we are exploring.

We will also begin our discussion by reading one very brief historical account of computers as well two seminal texts in STS and one in legal studies that proposes various ways to address the relationship between technical architectures and politics. These texts will form one important theoretical backbone of our course.

Ceruzzi, Paul

Winner, Langdon
1986 “Do Artifacts have Politics?” The Whale and the Reactor

Mumford, Lewis
1964 Authoritarian and Democratic Technics.” Technology and Culture

Grimmelmann, James
2005 Regulation by Software. 14 Yale Law Journal 1719

Week 2: A First Look at Liberal Theory

Because liberal ideology and imaginations play such an important role in the rest of the course, we are going to spend this week getting acquainting ourselves with some of the basic attributes of liberal political theory and cultural commitments.

Peters, John Peters
2005 Courting the Abyss

Starr, Paul
2007 Freedom’s Power: The True Force of Liberalism

Week 3: Protocol, Access, and Network Neutrality

Galloway, Alex

Wu, Tim

Wu, Tim and Christopher Yoo
2006  “Keeping the Internet Neutral?”  Legal Affairs.  
http://www.legalaffairs.org/webexclusive/dc_printerfriendly.msp?id=86

Weiser, Phil and Robert Atkinson
http://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/a-third-way-on-network-neutrality

Week 4: ICANN and Internet Governance (***)

Crawford, Susan

Nunziato, Dawn

Before class and before reading these pieces, please read basic history of ICANN. Here is one useful place to begin  http://www.caslon.com.au/icannprofile1.htm

Week 5: Privacy, Filtering & Search Engines

Nissenbaum, Helen and Lucas Itrona
2000  “Shaping the Web: Why the Politics of Search Engines Matter.”  The Information Society

Solove, Daniel
2004  The Digital Person: Technology and Privacy in the Digital Age [Chapter 1, 9 and 11]

Zittrain, Jonathan and John Palfrey

Deibert, Ronald and Rafal Rohozinski

Week 6: Hacking Liberalism

Kelty, Chris
2008 Two Bits: The Cultural Significance of Free Software [Chapter 1 and 2]

Warner, Michael
2002 “Publics and Counterpublics.” In Publics and Counterpublics

Coleman, Gabriella and Alex Golub

Week 7: Free as in Speech, not as in Beer

Kelty, Chris
2008 Two Bits: The Cultural Significance of Free Software [Rest of part one and part two]

John, Peter Durham
2005 Courting the Abyss

Week 8: The Politics of Transgression

Thomas, Douglas
2003 Hacker Culture

Walter Benjamin,

Foucault, Michel
1977 Language, Counter-memory, practice. Selected essays and interviews. Edited by Bouchard. (pp. 29-52)

Week 9: Piracy, Capitalism, and DRM

Watch at home before class: “Steal This Film” http://www.stealthisfilm.com/Part1/

Roth, Daniel

Mason, Matt
2008 The Pirates Dilemma: How Youth Culture is Reinventing Capitalism [Read chapter 1 and 2]

Derrida, Jacques
1992 "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'” in Deconstruction and the
Possibility of Justice.

Gillespie, Tarelton

Talking to Pirates
2008 http://www.positech.co.uk/talkingtopirates.html

Visit before class: http://thepiratebay.org/

**Part Three: Social Movements, Grassroots Activism, and New Digital Media**

**Week 10: Rethinking Social Movements, Protest, and New Technologies**

Tarrow, Sidney
2005 The New Transnational Activism [Chapter 1, 3, and 7]

De Donk, Leader, Nixon, and Rucht,

Rossiter, Ned and Brett Neilson
2006 “Towards a Political Anthropology of New Institutional Forms.” Ephemera http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/6-4/6-4index.htm

Scholz, Trebor

Before class, please read over this site “An Introduction to Activism on the Internet” http://backspace.com/action/

**Week 11: Grassroots Activism and Citizen Journalism**

Tiffany Danitz and Warren

Brigitte Le Grignou and Charles Patou
2004 “ATTAC(K)ing expertise: does the Internet really democratize knowledge? Cyberprotest: New media, Citizens and Social Movements

Gilmor, Dan
2005 We the Media [Chapter 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11]

**Week 12: The Fight Against Neoliberal Capitalism and the Revitalization of Anarchist Politics**
Week 13: Web 2.0 in the Context of Balkanization, the Right, and the Global South

Sunstein, Cass
2003 republic.com [chapters TBD]

Statzel, Sophie
2008 “Cybersupremacy: The New Face and Form of White Supremacist Activism.” Digital Media and Democracy: Tactics in Hard Times

Zuckerman, Ethan


Week 14: Conclusion

Student Presentations.