Government JH94: American Cyber Politics
Fall 2019
Mondays 12-2:45, Location TBD
Introduction Session: Wed., Sept. 4, 4-5pm, CGIS K262

Dr. Jenn Halen
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Office Location: TBD
Office Hours: TBD

Course Description:

This class explores the ways internet-based and computational technologies are changing political behavior and governing institutions and processes. This includes discussing technologies, such as social media, that influence partisanship, civic participation, and activism, as well as technologies adopted within government, such as pretrial risk assessment software and predictive policing tools. In addition to analyzing the effects of basic automation and the internet, we will also be focusing on emerging computational technologies including the Internet of Things, Augmented and Virtual Reality, Advanced Robotics, Machine Learning, and Artificial Intelligence. We will be reading research drawn from political science and other social science approaches, as well as pieces from cross/inter/anti-disciplinary methods. All class materials will be available on the course website. Students will also write their own research papers on a related course topic. To prepare for this assignment, we will dedicate a portion of several classes to discussing research approaches and methodologies, especially in relation to new and emerging subject areas.

**Note: Draft. This syllabus is subject to revision**

Grades

Class Participation (15%)
Weekly short responses (10%)
Research Paper
  Proposal (10%)
  Annotated Bibliography (10%)
  Data Analysis (10%)
  Final Paper (45%)
Assignment Descriptions and Due Dates

Class Participation: Students are expected to be prepared for class and ready to participate. This is a small, discussion-based class, and I look forward to hearing everyone’s thoughts about the material and related subjects. We will also occasionally use in-class simulations and activities that will require student engagement.

Weekly Topic Post: In addition to considering the questions listed under each week in the syllabus (in preparation for class discussion), students will be required to write a short post before each class containing 1) several of the points they found most interesting in the weekly reading and 2) 2-3 questions they have about the readings or topic area. This post will be due at 6pm the night before class.

Meetings: I will meet with each student individually between the beginning of the semester and the due date of the proposal. This will give us a chance to discuss your interests, any ideas you have regarding the research paper, and your goals for the course, as a whole. Students will sign up in advance via the course website. I will do my best to accommodate everyone's schedules. Students are also welcome and encouraged to speak with me during office hours. If you need to meet at another time, please feel free to email me to discuss possible times.

Research Paper: In preparation for the final research paper, students will submit several components of the projects throughout the semester, including a research proposal, an annotated bibliography with a prospective literature review outline, a completed data analysis section, and lastly, the full research paper. More details will be provided on the course website.
Policies

Late Work: Assignments will lose 2-grade points per day except in the case of documented medical or family problems.

Absentee Policy: Attendance and active participation in class are critical and mandatory. Students may miss one class if needed, all other absences should be discussed with me as soon as possible. This does not include the introduction class on Sept. 4th, 2019.

Collaboration Policy: The exchange of ideas is essential to strong academic work. For assignments in this course, feel free to discuss with your classmates your ideas. For your research papers, you may find it useful to share sources or discuss your thinking, particularly if you are working on a similar topic. You may even read each other’s drafts and provide feedback. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit to me is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own thinking and approach to the topic. You must be sure to cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that you draw on.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability should present their Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the Professor within the first three weeks of class meetings. All discussions will remain confidential.
Course schedule

Week 1 (9/4): Course Overview

***Different Meeting time/place: **Wed., Sept. 4, 4-5pm, CGIS K262

Week 2 (9/9): *The Politics of Technology- What’s at Stake*
How are politics and technology related? Can a technology be ideological or partisan? If so, is that an inherent trait of the technology or are those the consequences of how the technology was used?

- Winner, L. (1980). Do artifacts have politics?. *Daedalus* (121-136)

Week 3 (9/16): *Digital Technology and Its Influence on Identity*
How has the internet shaped your identity or view of yourself and how you fit into the world?

  - Chapter 3
  - Chapter 1 (1-37)
Week 4 (9/23): Digital Technology and Social Understanding
How have digital technologies shaped the social and political relations? How do you think they have shaped the way you think about your community, country, and the world?

  - Chapter 4

  - Introduction
  - Chapter 1
  - Chapter 2
  - Chapter 3
  - Chapter 7

Week 5 (9/30): New Technology, Same Old Problems
How have the internet and other computational technologies worsened or alleviated social inequality? Do you think the harms discussed in the reading stem from unintended consequences or purposeful decisions? Are these two mutually exclusive?

  - Chapters TBD


Week 6 (10/7): Technology and Public Services
What things should policymakers and software engineers be aware of before implementing a new technology within a government process? How do choices within the tech creation process affect the outcome? What are the costs and benefits of using computational technologies for public policy needs? What kind of practices can be put in place to limit these harms?


Week 7 (10/14)- NO CLASS, Indigenous People’s Day

Week 8 (10/21): The Internet and Political Organizing
How have candidates and campaigns used technology to mobilize voters and constituents? What do we know about the average American voter’s behavior and how might technology change voting and participation dynamics? Is micro-targeting a harm or benefit to the democratic process?

Assigned Readings:
  [9 Chapters TBD]

- Kreiss, D. (2017). Micro-targeting, the quantified persuasion. INTERNET POLICY REVIEW


**Week 9 (10/28): Online Propaganda and Public Opinion**

In what ways does the internet help or hurt the search for “the truth”? How have governments deployed online misinformation or propaganda either against their own people or across borders as information warfare? Are there ways to counter this? Is mis/disinformation different today then it was in the 20th century? Have you ever read something online that you thought was true but turned out to be purposefully misinformative?

**Assigned Readings:**


**Week 10 (11/4): Internet Activism and Civic Action**

Would groups like the #MeToo or Black Lives Matter movement be able to exist without the internet? Recently, online activism has become an important political force- why is this? Are these movements sustainable given the changing pace and attention of online communities?

**Assigned Readings:**


  o Chapters TBD

• Tufekci, Z. (2017). Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest. Yale University Press. ONLY:
  o Chapters TBD

• Howard, P. N. (2015). Pax Technica: How the Internet of things may set us free or lock us up. Yale University Press. ONLY:
  o Chapter 3

**Week 11 (11/11): NO CLASS, Veterans Day**

**Week 12 (11/18): Economic Opportunity, Manipulation, and Policy**
How is data intertwined with the economy? In what ways has this changed because of new technologies or increased access to technology? Who benefits? Who is harmed?

**Assigned Readings:**

• Sadowski, J. (2018). When data is capital: Datafication, accumulation, and extraction. Big Data & Society, 6(1).


  o Chapter 3
  o Chapter 4
  o Chapter 5
  o Chapter 6
Pinkerton, B., and Kliff S. (2017) The case for and against a universal basic income in the United States. VOX.

Week 13 (11/25): The Politics of Security and Surveillance

Are there ways in which surveillance might make us less safe? What are the implications of using technologies that have not been effectively tested for accuracy? Are there certain types of data that should be protected, such as health information?

Assigned Readings:

Week 14 (12/2): Predicting Prediction- The Future of Innovation and Innovation Policy

How might technology change in the next 10, 20, or 50 years? Do you think the world will be significantly different than it is today because of these changes? What kinds of policies might shape these outcomes? What are the benefits and risks of those policies?


**Final Paper Due: TBD**