**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: If you would like to take this course, please apply for the GOV 94 lottery. The online Gov 94 lottery form must be submitted by 6 p.m. on Monday, August 22. Students who fail to submit a 94 lottery form on time will receive last priority in the assignment of seminars. Students will be notified of the lottery results no later than August 23. You can find the form and directions here: [https://undergrad.gov.harvard.edu/gov-94-seminars](https://undergrad.gov.harvard.edu/gov-94-seminars)

**Assignments & Grades**

- Class Participation (10%)
- Beginning and End-of-Semester Office Hours (2.5% each= 5%)
- 10 Weekly Short Responses (15%)
- Unessay Proposal (5%) **Due: 9/29/22**
- Unessay (20%) **Due: 10/13/22**
- Research Paper Proposal (5%) **Due: 10/27/22**
- Annotated Bibliography (10%) **Due: 11/17/22**
- Final Paper (30%) **Due: 12/13/22**
Assignment Descriptions

**In-class participation- discussions, simulations, and other activities:** 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. Many classes will include participatory activities and simulations in which all students will be expected to contribute.

**2 Office Hour Meetings:** I will meet with each student individually during September and again in late November or December. 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 at other points in the semester!

**Weekly Discussion Posts (10 @ 1% each= 10%):** You may pick which 10 classes, but each post should be submitted Wednesday by 11:59pm 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.

**Unessay Proposal:** Students will submit a 1 page proposal outlining their prospective unessay project.

**Unessay:** this project will allow you to further explore your research topic using a unique medium. Students may work on their unessay alone or within groups (note: all group members will receive the same grade). More details will be provided in class and on the course website.

**Research Proposal:** Students will submit a 2-3 page proposal outlining their prospective research.

**Annotated Bibliography:** Students will submit 5-7 citations of scholarly works with brief annotated summaries (aim for 150-200 words) for each. These citations should be for works that you will be using to support your research.

**Research Paper:** More details will be provided in class and on the course website. Please take advantage of online aids such as the class Research Guide on Canvas or GovWrites (online introductory lessons and advice offered by the Harvard Gov Dept.) and in-person aid, such as by speaking to me directly (you can schedule a meeting with me here), by visiting the Harvard College Writing Center (scheduled meetings and walk-ins available), or by using the library’s resources including one-on-one support and peer assistance.
Policies

Laptop/Tablet/Phone Policy: Please bring a device to class to participate in Poll Everywhere.

Late Work: Assignments will lose 2 points per day, except in cases discussed and excused by me.

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.

Collaboration Policy: The exchange of ideas is essential to strong academic work. For assignments in this course, feel free to discuss your ideas with classmates. 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.

Childcare: For any students with children or caretaking responsibilities, you are welcome to bring children to class if necessary. Please let me know and I will help to accommodate you in any way I can.
Course schedule

Week 1 (9/8): 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?

Assigned Readings:

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

Optional Readings:


Week 2: Digital Technology and Its Influence on Identity
*Introduction Survey Due*

How has the internet shaped your identity or view of yourself and how you fit into the world?

Assigned Readings:


Optional Readings:

**Week 3: Digital Technology and Social Understanding**

How have digital technologies shaped social and political relationships and knowledge? How have they affected our general ability to think and understand the world around us?

**Assigned Readings:**

  - Read all, but especially the intro and chapters 1, 2, 3, and 7


**Optional:**


**Week 4: 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?

**Assigned Readings:**


**Optional Readings:**

Week 5: 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?

Assigned Readings:

- Eubanks, V. (2018) Automating inequality: How high-tech tools profile, police, and punish the poor. ONLY: Chapters 1 & 4


Optional Readings:


Week 6: Design Justice
- After considering the problems rife in current technologies, how would you define “design justice”? It’s been over two decades since the publication of ‘A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace’ how have internet-based technologies either met these descriptions or failed to meet them? What would a new Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace look like? How can we incorporate values in design more intentionally? How would this process work?

Assigned Readings:


**Week 7: Online Political Organizing, Public Opinion, and Propaganda**

In what ways does the internet help or hurt the search for “the truth”? 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? 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:**


**Optional Readings:**


**Week 8: Internet Activism and Civic Action**

Would groups like the #MeToo or the 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? How have you contributed or interacted with politics/activism/civic issues online?

**Assigned Readings:**


• Tufekci, Z. (2017). Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest. Yale University Press. [Excerpts- see Canvass for details]

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

**Optional Readings:**


• All of Mina (2019) and Tufekci (2017) are both recommended!

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

**Week 9: 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:**

- Pinkerton, B., and Kliff S. (2017) The case for and against a universal basic income in the United States. VOX.

Optional Readings:

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

Week 10: 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:

- (Video) Bruce Schneier: The Security Mirage

Optional Readings:


Week 11: 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?

