

Government 94as
Spring 2020
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THE POLITICS OF VIRTUAL REALITIES

How has technology changed our politics? Have those changes all been for the good? In this course, we will explore the political, legal, and normative implications of the Internet for liberal democracy. The first part of the course investigates the interplay between capitalism, technology, and democratic values. We will start by looking at the US Constitution, exploring arguments that the document cannot, by itself, prevent the Internet from becoming a domain of manipulation rather than of freedom. How can we uphold the ideals of liberty and equality? What impact has technology had on the marketplace of ideas and civic community? The second part of the course considers a wide range of cases that illuminate key issues in our study of the Internet's contemporary impact on our politics. The third and final section revisits the themes with which the course began to reflect on the future of human freedom in the digital age. Special attention will be given to the potential tradeoff between what we want as consumers and what we need as citizens, as well as between privacy rights and national security, and the challenges of mediating international conflicts in cyberspace.

GOV94as will meet on Thursdays from 12:00-2:45 PM ET ~~in the Hoffmann Seminar Room of the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies~~ ON ZOOM. You will be expected to complete all of the assigned reading and reaction papers (more below) in timely fashion, and to come to each meeting prepared to be an active participant. Each week, you will be given some study questions in advance to guide your reading and preparation.

Though it assumes no prior knowledge, the course surveys a great deal of material rapidly. Should you find yourself wanting greater background on a particular issue than the required readings provide, you are encouraged to see me for suggestions.

Course Requirements:

- A 5-7 page paper on a topic to be handed out on Thursday, February 20. The paper will be due in my ~~CES mailbox~~ inbox by 4:00 PM ET, on Monday, March 2. It will be based entirely on readings already assigned for class and no additional reading will be required. Please submit as a Word document. (20% of course grade)
- A 5-7 page paper on a topic to be handed out on Thursday, April 2. The paper will be due in my ~~CES mailbox~~ inbox by 4:00 PM ET, on Monday, April 13. Again, it will be based entirely on readings already assigned for class and no additional reading will be required. Please submit as a Word document. (20% of course grade)

- A 10-12 page final paper on a mutually agreed upon topic due on Wednesday, May 6. You must submit a prospectus for your final paper and have it approved by me on or before Thursday, April 16. (30% of course grade)
- Active participation in the course. To assist you in this realm, all students will be required to submit electronically a reaction paper on each day's assigned readings. Reaction papers will be due by midnight the day before the class in question meets, since I will want to read them before our meeting to help me to shape our discussion that day. Your performance on these informal papers will be factored into your final participation grade. In some weeks, we will substitute other activities for the regular reaction papers. These exercises will also be factored into your participation grade. The participation grades will not be curved. Nothing would make me happier than to witness you all earn A's in this category. But that is up to you. (30% of course grade).

A word of caution: One-third of a grade (e.g. from B+ to B) will be deducted for each day a paper is late. Only a note from the Health Center will waive this penalty. Fairness mandates that no exceptions be made.

Collaboration: Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For written assignments in this course, you are encouraged to engage with your classmates and to share thoughts and sources. The questions are designed to make you think, and trying out your preliminary ideas on someone is a good way to focus your argument.

That collaboration should end, however, where your writing begins. Please be sure to properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you get feedback on drafts along the way, you should acknowledge this assistance.

Office Hours:

Thursdays, 2-3 PM ET and 4-5 PM ET ON ZOOM
or by appointment

GOV 94as Web Page: With the exception of books for purchase, all the materials for this course can be accessed through the GOV94as Canvas site. You will note below that some of your assigned materials are only available electronically.

Course Readings: Required readings available for purchase at the Coop and elsewhere are listed below. There will also be additional readings to access electronically via the hyperlinks in this syllabus or the Canvas course website. These latter readings are marked with an asterisk [*] in the syllabus.

The Constitution and Declaration of Independence (will be handed out in class)

Eggers, Dave. *The Circle* (Vintage Books, 2014).

Lessig, Lawrence. *Code 2.0* (New York: Basic Books, 2006). Available free of charge at <http://codev2.cc/> (costs less to buy than to print out).

O'Neil, Cathy. *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy* (New York: Broadway Books, 2017).

Snowden, Edward. *Permanent Record* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2019).

Stephens-Davidowitz, Seth. *Everybody Lies: Big Data, New Data, and What the Internet Can Tell Us About Who We Really Are* (New York: Dey Street, 2017).

COURSE OUTLINE AND REQUIRED READINGS

I. AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY AND THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION

Tuesday, January 28—Introductory meeting.

Thursday, January 30—What is Representation?

Readings:

*Locke, Second Treatise, Chapters 2-3, pp. 269-282, and Chapters 8-9, pp. 330-53.

The Declaration of Independence (pamphlet)

Constitution and Amendments, 1787 (pamphlet)

*Burke, Edmund. Excerpt from "Speech to the Electors of Bristol," 3 November 1774

*Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, Federalist Numbers 35 (pp. 211-217), 39 (pp. 240-246), 45 (pp. 288-294), 55 (pp. 341-346), 57 (pp. 350-356), and 62-63 (pp. 376-390)

*Jefferson, Thomas, Letter to John Adams, 28 October 1813

Thursday, February 6—The Democratic Supports of Liberty

Reading:

*Tocqueville, Volume One: Part II, Chapters 7-9 (pp. 235-298). Volume Two: Part II, Chapters 1-4 (pp. 479-488) and Part IV, Chapters 1 (pp. 639-640) and 6-8 (pp. 661-676).

*John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapters 1-3.

Thursday, February 13—What Does Modern Technology Reveal?

Readings:

*Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” (1949)

Lawrence Lessig, *Code 2.0*, pp. 1-153.

Thursday, February 20—Latent Ambiguities and Competing Sovereigns

Reading:

Lessig, parts 3 and 4, pp. 157-339.

Matthew Desmond, “In order to understand the brutality of American capitalism, you have to start on the plantation.” *The New York Times Magazine*, Aug. 14, 2019.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/slavery-capitalism.html>

Paper topics handed out.

II. THE INTERNET AND POLITICS: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Thursday, February 27— Big Data

Reading:

Seth Stephens-Davidowitz, *Everybody Lies: Big Data, New Data, and What the Internet Can Tell Us About Who We Really Are*.

Papers due in my CES mailbox by 4:00 PM, on Monday, March 2.

Thursday, March 5—Privacy and Encryption

Readings:

*Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, Chapters 1 and 18 (Introduction and Conclusion), pp. 3-24 and 495-531.

*Daniel J. Solove, “I’ve Got Nothing to Hide’ and Other Misunderstandings of Privacy,” *San Diego Law Review*, vol. 44, pp. 745-772. http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=998565

*Daniel J. Solove, “Five Myths About Privacy,” *Washington Post*, June 13, 2013. http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/five-myths-about-privacy/2013/06/13/098a5b5c-d370-11e2-b05f-3ea3f0e7bb5a_story.html?hpid=z2

*Jeffrey Rosen, “Madison’s Privacy Blind Spot,” *New York Times*, January 18, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/opinion/has-privacy-become-a-luxury-good.html?src=me&ref=general>

*Julia Angwin, “Has Privacy Become a Luxury Good?” *New York Times*, March 3, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/opinion/has-privacy-become-a-luxury-good.html?src=me&ref=general>

*Somini Sengupta, “Should Personal Data Remain Personal?” *New York Times*, February 5, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/05/sunday-review/europe-moves-to-protect-online-privacy.html?hpw>

*Timothy B. Lee, “The Dark Web: What it is, How it Works, and Why it is not Going Away,” *Vox*, December 31, 2014. <http://www.vox.com/2014/12/31/7470965/dark-web-explained>

*Speech by Brad Smith, Microsoft’s General Counsel, “Privacy and Trust in the Cloud,” May 19, 2014 <http://news.microsoft.com/2014/05/19/brad-smith-privacy-and-trust-in-the-cloud/>

“How does Bitcoin work?” <https://bitcoin.org/en/how-it-works>

Satashi Nakamoto, “Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System,” <https://bitcoin.org/bitcoin.pdf>

Thursday, March 12—NO MEETING TODAY

Reading:

Dave Eggers, *The Circle* (Vintage Books, 2014), pp. 1-189.

SPRING BREAK

Thursday, March 26—Human Dignity and Friendship

Readings:

Dave Eggers, *The Circle* (Vintage Books, 2014), pp. 190-491 (finish book).

*Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII (written 350 BCE).
<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.8.viii.html>

~~Public lecture by Allison Stanger, Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics, 5:00 PM, Location TBD. All GOV94as students are expected to attend. CANCELLED,~~
ALAS. I AM GOING TO DO A VERSION JUST FOR YOU IN APRIL; THE SILVER LINING IS THAT THE ASYNCHRONOUS VERSION CAN ALIGN OPTIMALLY WITH OUR SYLLABUS!

Thursday, April 2 — Algorithms of Oppression or Progress?

Reading:

Cathy O’Neil, *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy* (New York: Broadway Books, 2017).

Jaron Lanier and E. Glen Weyl, “How Civic Technology Can Help Stop a Pandemic,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 20, 2020.
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2020-03-20/how-civic-technology-can-help-stop-pandemic>

Paper topics handed out.

Watch “The Great Hack” (2019) before our next class meeting.

III. THE FUTURE OF FREEDOM

Thursday, April 9—Foreign Electoral Interference

Readings:

*Allison Stanger, *Whistleblowers: Honesty in America from Washington to Trump* (Yale, 2019), chapters 5-8, pp. 107-188.

*Debora L. Spar, “Facebook Faces the Regulators,” Harvard Business School Case N9-720-019, December 20, 2019.

*Roger McNamee, *Zucked: Waking up to the Facebook Catastrophe*, Prologue, Chapter 10, and Appendix One, pp. 1-12, 177-198, and 297-300. NOW RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED.

*Text of the Espionage Act
<http://codes.lp.findlaw.com/uscode/18/1/37/793>

*Julian Assange, “The Banality of Google’s ‘Don’t Be Evil’,” *New York Times*, June 2, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/02/opinion/sunday/the-banality-of-googles-dont-be-evil.html?pagewanted=all>

**New York Times*, “The War Logs” (Interactive coverage of the October 2010 Wikileaks document dump)
<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/world/war-logs.html> or
“State’s Secrets” (Interactive coverage of the December 2010 Wikileaks document dump)
http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/world/statessecrets.html?src=fbmain?src=ISMR_AP_LO_MST_FB. Read the articles that most interest you. Your aim is to get a good sense of the general issues for our discussion.

Papers due in my inbox by 4:00 PM ET, on Monday, April 13. Please send as a Word document, so I can use the markup function.

Thursday, April 16—Government Surveillance

Readings:

Edward Snowden, *Permanent Record* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2019).

The prospectus for your final paper must be approved by today.

Thursday, April 23— AI Superpowers and Global Governance

Readings:

*Kai-Fu Le, *AI Superpowers: China, Silicon Valley and the New World Order* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2018), Introduction and chapters 1-4, pp. 1-103.

Brad Smith, Keynote Address at the 2017 RSA Conference
<https://blogs.microsoft.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Transcript-of-Brad-Smiths-Keynote-Address-at-the-RSA-Conference-2017.pdf>

George Soros, 2019 speech at the World Economic Forum
<https://www.georgesoros.com/2019/01/24/remarks-delivered-at-the-world-economic-forum-2/>

*Allison Stanger, “Justice and Inequality in a Big Data World: Why Machine Learning Must Not Be Left to Its Own Devices,” on-line lecture, to be viewed at a time that works for you. Bring questions to class!

Thursday, April 30—Virtual War

Readings:

*Joseph S. Nye, “Deterrence and Dissuasion in Cyberspace,” *International Security*, vol. 41, no. 3, Winter 2016/17, pp. 44-71.

*Peter W. Singer, *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century* (Penguin, 2009), Introduction, “Scenes from a Robot War,” and Chapter 17, “Changing the Experience of War and the Warrior,” pp. 19-41 and 326-343.

Nicole Perlroth and Scott Shane, “**In Baltimore and Beyond, a Stolen N.S.A. Tool Wreaks Havoc,**” *New York Times*, May 25, 2019.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/25/us/nsa-hacking-tool-baltimore.html>

Kevin Roose, “Buckle Up for Another Facebook Election,” *New York Times*, January 10, 2020.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/10/technology/facebook-election.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage>

Get out your Constitutions and review the First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendments. No reaction papers today; please instead submit a rough draft outline of your final paper.

Your final papers are due in my inbox the last day of reading period, Wednesday, May 6.