

Research Primers

The New Geography of the Information Age
CS-2378/ POL-2070/ MS-3511 (Monsoon 2024)

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Guidelines

Objective

The New Geography of the Information Age addresses the complex socio-technical challenges that arise as society navigates its way through the Information Age, often without clear foresight. Having examined various real-world problems — often ill-defined and lacking complete data — the final project aims to equip students with the skills to propose actionable solutions to these issues. This Research Primer outlines a non-exhaustive list of such problems, challenging researchers, policymakers, and bureaucrats alike. While you are not restricted to choosing a topic from the list or its suggested sub-questions, the key expectations for your project are:

1. It must be **methodologically sound** and capable of serving as a springboard for more extensive research.
2. It should clearly align with **responsible computing principles**, making a positive social impact. **Generic policy suggestions are discouraged.**

Recommended Structure

Students are encouraged to plan projects with the following components:

1. Define a clear research question

Define a clear list of sub-questions and hypotheses you wish to test.

Think about the exact principles of the Constitution or the Fundamental Rights in question for any problem, and which of those principles/rights you are looking to solve for when defining the sub-questions.

For instance, if you are working on quick commerce - think about what it means, on a fundamental level, to ask a gig worker to deliver groceries within 10 minutes during a thunderstorm. How does providing for such a service affect labour rights?

2. Data collection

While both aspects of data collection are not mandated, you are encouraged to incorporate both into your research study.

a. Fieldwork

Interviews/Case Studies/Surveys with *stakeholders* of a problem & regulatory fieldwork. Please refer to proper literature on fieldwork conducted for similar problems and outline operational definitions of your variables for the methodology. Avoid generic surveys with poorly-defined questions. You are

strongly encouraged to reach out to the RAs/any of the course staff for help with this.

b. Curating relevant datasets

If you need access to a dataset that is not publicly available, make sure you reach out to us for assistance well in advance.

3. Analysis

Self-explanatory.

4. Scaling the solution/idea proposed

When dealing with problems of this nature, always consider how your solution will scale. Students do not have to propose an ideal solution, as long as it is well-thought out and researched. Fieldwork is crucial for this aspect of the project, as the challenges in implementation are often brought to light only by people with practical experience working on the same.

5. Ethical implications

In line with the first component, think of the ethical implications of the solutions you are proposing/ (broadly) the project you are implementing.

For instance, if you propose any AI-driven or automated solutions, think of the ethical implications of having a potentially biased algorithm in play, and how that aligns with the rights afforded to us by the Constitution.

Students should note that there is funding available for the project for components like fieldwork. You will have to put in timely requests to the RAs or Professor to avail of the same.

Submission Guidelines

The projects are meant to be worked on individually. Unless absolutely necessary for the project, you are advised to not work in groups. Note that the depth expected of projects will be more if you choose to do the projects in groups. You will also be required to detail the exact contributions of every member. Plagiarism will be penalised **strongly**.

The final projects are due on December 9th, 2024. You are required to submit a concise pdf document. Feel free to complement it with a video presentation in case you have a coding demo or specific fieldwork interviews you want to highlight.

Please remember - You have ~1.5 months to work on this project. Keep in mind the implications of research into such problems and ensure that you give it the time and energy required. If you present an AI-generated report finished in 2 days - we will know.