Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Spring Semester 2025

8,694: Medien/Media: Social Media Governance - Business Practice and Societal Complexities

ECTS credits: 3

Overview examination/s
(binding regulations see below)
decentral - Written work, Digital, Individual work individual grade (60%)
Examination time: Term time
decentral - Presentation, Analog, Group work group grade (40%)
Examination time: Term time

Attached courses
Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer
8,694,1.00 Medien/Media: Social Media Governance - Business Practice and Societal Complexities -- English -- Ebert Isabel

Course information

Course prerequisites

None

Learning objectives

After the successful completion of the course students will

- understand roles and responsibilities of key actors in the social media ecosystem;
- grasp core concepts of social science studies as they relate to digital technologies and internet governance;
- have acquired capacities to apply a solution-based approach to govern the social media ecosystem responsibly;
- are able to analyze the impact of business model and monetization structures on the social media ecosytem;
- depict impacts on people and society stemming from or being linked to data-based business models;
- propose alternative business models for the data economy.

Course content

This course will introduce the key actors and institutions of social media governance, and their roles and responsibilites, depicting regulatory efforts to ensure a responsible information ecosystem. Adding to this, the course contents will cover self-governing measures which social media platforms employ to curate content and address issues such as misinformation, privacy, data security, hate speech, and freedom of expression. The course includes a comprehensive analysis of global governance frameworks, case studies of platform policies, and the impact of artificial intelligence and algorithmic decision-making in content governance. While focusing on the societal impact of social media governance, the course will also convey the fundamentals of social media business models and their monetization strategies, in order to illustrate were the root causes of certain adverse impacts are stemming from. It will also depict specific roles of social media in the context of post-/conflict societies as well as illustrate key dilemma using the case of dating apps.

Course structure and indications of the learning and teaching design
- Governance of social media in context: Regulation, roles and responsibilities of platforms
- Social media business models and monetization strategies
- Current practice of social media platforms: content governance, targeted advertising and societal impact at-large
- The information ecosystem and social media: misinformation/disinformation, protect of journalists

- The role of social media in post- and conflict settings: from assisting in documenting war crimes to spreading incitement of violence
- Privacy, Surveillance, Data Security: The case of Dating Apps
- Managerial solutions – lessons learnt from engagement with companies and advocacy by civil society

Contextual Studies are considered part of **Contact Learning**; thus, taking part properly implies **regular attendance**. It is the students' own responsibility to ensure that there is **no timetable clash** between the courses they have chosen. A detailed course outline and all relevant documents will be made available on **StudyNet**. Only the current timetable as published on **Courses** does apply.

Course literature

Camargo, C.Q. and Simon, F.M. (2022) "Mis-and disinformation studies are too big to fail: Six suggestions for the field's future", Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review. 3 (5).

Deibert, R. (2019). "The Road to Digital Unfreedom: Three Painful Truths About Social Media." Journal of Democracy 30(1): 25-39

Elswah, M., et al. (2019). "Iranian digital Interference in the Arab World." Data Memo. Project on Computational Propaganda, Oxford, United Kingdom: 1850-1867.

Flyverbom, M., et al. (2019). "The Governance of Digital Technology, Big Data, and the Internet: New Roles and Responsibilities for Business." Business & Society 58(1): 3- 19.

Global Network Initiative & BSR (2022): Human Rights Due Diligence Across the Technology Ecosystem https://eco.globalnetworkinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Human-Rights-Due- Diligence-Across-the-Technology-Ecosystem_Ecosystem-Mapping_Oct2022.pdf

GNI (2020) The GNI Principles https://globalnetworkinitiative.org/gni-principles/

GNI (2023: Company assessment reports https://globalnetworkinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/GNI_PAR23_.pdf

Horowitz, Jonathan, One Click from Conflict: Some Legal Considerations Related to Technology Companies Providing Digital Services in Situations of Armed Conflict (January 31, 2024). Chicago Journal of International Law, Vol 24 No 2, Winter 2024, Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=4470988

Human Rights Watch (2022): Russia, Ukraine, and Social Media and Messaging Apps https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/16/russia-ukraine-and-social-media-and-messaging-apps

MacKinnon, R. (2007). "Shi Tao, Yahoo!, and the lessons for corporate social responsibility."

Nash, V., Bright, J., Lehdonvirta, V. and Margetts, H. (2017) "Public Policy in the Platform Society", Policy and Internet. 9 (4) 368-373.

Simon, F.M. (2019) ""We power democracy": Exploring the promises of the political data analytics industry", INFORMATION SOCIETY. 35 (3) 158-169.

Additional course information

Dr. Isabel Ebert is an Adviser at the United Nations Human Rights Office in Geneva, working on digital governance and the responsibility of technology companies. She is a member of the OECD AI Group of Experts.

Examination information

Examination sub part/s

1. Examination sub part (1/2)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Written work
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Written work
Examination mode	Digital
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Asynchronous
Examination location	Off Campus
Grading type	Individual work individual grade
Weighting	60%

Duration   --

Examination languages
Question language: English
Answer language: English

Remark
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Examination-aid rule
Free aids provision

Basically, students are free to choose aids. Any restrictions are defined by the faculty members in charge of the examination under supplementary aids.

Supplementary aids
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2. Examination sub part (2/2)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Presentation
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Oral examination
Examination mode	Analog
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Asynchronous
Examination location	On Campus
Grading type	Group work group grade
Weighting	40%
Duration	--

Examination languages
Question language: English
Answer language: English

Remark
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Examination-aid rule
Free aids provision

Basically, students are free to choose aids. Any restrictions are defined by the faculty members in charge of the examination under supplementary aids.

Supplementary aids
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Examination content

1. Students will be required to conduct and present a group work in class, which articulates the key takeaways and methods learnt in the class. This will consist of a **company case study within the social media landscape**. Student groups will choose a company and specific digital product, will analyze the monetization strategy and business model, and the management structure. They will depict the company's risk exposure with regard to societal impacts and potential solutions to address these risks. 40%

2. The term paper is an **individual essay, which may build on the group work, while deepening the analysis** and anchor it within the academic literature discourse. The length of the essay should be **approx. 4000-5000 words, excl. title page and references**. It will be evaluated by the issues addressed, the concepts used and the critical analysis made after doing the group presentation as well as a personal critical reflection. 60%

Examination relevant literature

See Course Literature.

Please note

Please note that only this fact sheet and the examination schedule published at the time of bidding are binding and takes precedence over other information, such as information on StudyNet (Canvas), on lecturers' websites and information in lectures etc.
Any references and links to third-party content within the fact sheet are only of a supplementary, informative nature and lie outside the area of responsibility of the University of St.Gallen.

Documents and materials are only relevant for central examinations if they are available by the end of the lecture period (CW21) at the latest. In the case of centrally organised mid-term examinations, the documents and materials up to CW 13 (Monday, 25 March 2025) are relevant for testing.

Binding nature of the fact sheets:

- Course information as well as examination date (organised centrally/decentrally) and form of examination: from bidding start in CW 04 (Thursday, 23 January 2025);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for decentralised examinations: in CW 12 (Monday, 17 March 2025);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised mid-term examinations: in CW 14 (Monday, 31 March 2025);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised examinations: two weeks before ending with de-registration period in CW 15 (Monday, 07 April 2025).