

Public Policy and the Internet

INF 327E # 28275

Spring 2012

Friday 9:00AM – 12PM; UTA 1.504

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Office Hours: By Appointment

Prerequisites: Upper-Division Standing

TA: TBD

Course Overview:

This upper-division undergraduate course will use a case study approach to examine current public policy controversies including network neutrality, privacy, encryption, social media, surveillance, and digital identity, among others. Lectures and discussions will be grounded in the history of the Internet and related public policy and information theory.

Course Objectives:

Over the course of the semester, students will become familiar with theories of public policy as these theories relate to the Internet and Internet technology. Students will be able to understand an original policy document and the process(es), interests, and influence involved in moving a policy from a proposal to a law.

Students will also become familiar with the history, technical underpinnings, and the policies and laws that govern the Internet and Internet related behavior.

Lastly, students will improve their writing skills by following a structured writing exercise over the course of the semester. Students will develop a professional, highly polished writing sample on one of the topics covered in class.

Course Participation:

Students are expected to attend and actively participate in each class (see the grading section for the grade implications of missing a class session). Active participation includes thorough and comprehensive preparation outside of class by completing all assigned readings and thinking about these readings in a critical and creative fashion. Students should ask questions like:

- How do the readings relate to the other topics in the course?
- Does the author or topic make sense given your personal experience with social networking or the topic at hand?
- Do you believe what the author has to say, or have you read an opinion to the contrary?

In addition to the above questions, students should come prepared with one or two questions related to the reading that they would like to discuss in class. The instructor will send two to three discussion questions that will be covered in class each week related to the readings.

Participation also includes active engagement during class. Your opinions, ideas, and questions are important in creating an interesting and challenging course. This doesn't mean that you should try to dominate the conversation; one or two thoughtful remarks or clarifying questions can be incredibly valuable.

Assignments:

There are two major assignments for this class: a 5 – 8 page paper and a 10 – 15 minute presentation. These assignments will be used to assess the student's progress toward the course objectives. All assignments should be submitted through Blackboard in Microsoft Word format.

The Essay

The essay will be the end result of a semester's worth of work, with small assignments related to the final essay grade due throughout the semester. The essay is developed in a series of steps over the course of the semester:

1. Create a unique question related to the topics covered in class
 - a. Topics:
 - i. Censorship
 - ii. SOPA, PIPA, and DMCA
 - iii. Network Neutrality
 - iv. Cyber bullying
 - v. Copyright and file sharing
 - vi. Social networking
 - vii. Other – choose your own
2. Select 3 – 5 peer reviewed articles on which you will base your essay. You can use other sources, but you must have at least three peer-reviewed articles for your paper. The resource list must be properly formatted using APA.
3. Each of the outlines will help you develop your topic and the structure of the essay. You should spend less than an hour per week on each of these outlines.
4. The reading notes are a one to two paragraph summary of each of the readings you will include in your essay. Any quotations you hope to include in your essay should be included in your notes and be properly cited.
5. Rough drafts and revisions. The schedule is designed to offer plenty of opportunities for feedback on your writing and to make sure students have a good idea of the grade they have earned before the end of the semester.
6. The final essay will be due on or before the last class day.

If you complete a step by the due date, you are able to revise your work before the next assignment is due and improve your grade.

The Presentation

The 10 – 15 minute presentation will be based on the essay and will be presented after spring break. The presentation is worth a total of 20 points and will be graded on:

1. Content quality: 10 points
 - a. Did the audience learn something new? Did you offer a new perspective or explain complex concepts clearly? Did you thoroughly investigate the topic and offer more than one perspective, where appropriate?
2. Presentation quality: 10 points
 - a. Was the presentation engaging? Did you move around and establish eye contact with the audience? Did you speak clearly and avoid the word “um”? Were the slides well designed and easy to understand?

The paper will be graded based on the following assignments:

Assignment	Due Date	Points Possible
Paper Topic or Question	2/1	10
Resource List	2/15	20
Short Outline	3/1	10
Reading notes	3/8	10
10 Page Outline	3/22	10
Rough draft	3/29	10
Revised draft	4/26	10
Final Paper	5/3	40

Grading:

This course is primarily a discussion course, not a lecture. Students are expected to demonstrate active engagement with the course materials by sharing questions, comments and leading discussions. Both the paper and the presentation assignments must be completed to pass the course. Each assignment must be turned in on time in order to receive credit for that assignment. Students are often allowed to revise work based on professor and TA feedback for a higher grade. The goal of the course is for the student to master both the content and the skills necessary to communicate that content.

Essay:	60%
Presentation:	20%
Participation:	20%

Grading Breakdown:

A	=	190 - 200 points
A-	=	180 - 189

B+	=	173 - 179
B	=	166 - 172
B-	=	160 - 165
C+	=	153 - 159
C	=	146 - 152
C-	=	140 - 145
D	=	120 - 139 (passing, for students taking the class Credit/No Credit)
F	=	Below 119 points

Assignments will be graded out of 200 possible points. The essay will be worth 120 points, the presentation worth 40 points, and participation in the course worth 40 points.

Attendance will be taken during each session. Students are allowed to miss one class without penalty as long as they notify the instructor before class. Missing an additional class for any reason will cause the student to lose 10 points off of her participation grade for each class missed. Missing more than four classes will result in a failing grade for the class, regardless of the number of points accrued over the semester.

Schedule

January 18	Introduction to Course
January 25	Public Policy Read Kingdon Chapters 1 - 3
February 1	Public Policy Read Kingdon Chapters 4 - 6 Paper – Have your research question ready for class
February 8	Public Policy Read Kingdon Chapters 7 - 9 Paper – Revised paper question
February 15	Public Policy Read Miller Chapters 2 and 4 (available on Blackboard) Paper – Read and take notes on sources Paper – 5 - 8 sources (APA format)
February 22	History of the Internet Read Abbate Chapters 1 and 2 Paper – Read and take notes on sources
March 1	History of the Internet Read Abbate Chapters 3 and 4 Paper – short outline due
March 8	History of the Internet Read Abbate Chapters 5 and 6

	Paper – Reading notes due
March 15	Spring Break
March 22	The Future of the Internet Read Wu Part 1
March 29	The Future of the Internet Read Wu Part 2 Paper – 10 - page outline due
April 5	The Future of the Internet Read Wu Part 3 Paper – rough draft due
April 12	Current Events and Challenges in Public Policy Read Wu Part 4 Paper Presentations
April 19	Current Events and Challenges in Internet Technology Paper Presentations
April 26	Current Events and Challenges Paper Presentations Paper – revised draft due
May 3	Current Events Paper Presentations Final paper due Last class day

Reading

Required books:

Abbate, J. (2000). *Inventing the Internet*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Kingdon, J. (1995). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies*. New York, NY: Longman. Either edition, but I recommend the older version (half the price and we don't discuss the last chapter in the new edition, which is the only real difference). You can also rent this from Barnes & Noble, but it is worth buying this book; a classic in public policy.

Miller, M. (2003). *The 2% solution: Fixing America's problems in ways liberals and conservatives can love*. New York, NY: PublicAffairs Books. (The two chapters we will discuss will be available on Blackboard).

Wu, T. (2010). *The master switch: The rise and fall of information empires*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

University Policies

Academic Integrity

Please abide by the University's policy on academic integrity. All work you submit must be your own. "Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating and plagiarism... Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. University policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced." From: The University of Texas: General Information, Appendix C.

Special Needs

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. To determine if you qualify, please contact the Dean of Students at 471-6259; 471-4641 TTY. If they certify your needs, we will work with you to make appropriate arrangements.

Religious or Holy Day Observance

"A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence." (<http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi04-05/ch4/ch4g.html>)

Email

"Electronic mail (e-mail), like postal mail, is a mechanism for official University communication to students. The University will exercise the right to send e-mail communications to all students, and the University will expect that e-mail communications will be received and read in a timely manner." (<http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi04-05/app/appn.html>).