

The Politics of the Internet

University of Victoria

Political Science 456

TWF – 12:30-2:20

Location: SSM A357

Instructor: Christopher Parsons (parsons@uvic.ca)

Office Location: A309

Office Hours: Monday 2:00-5:00 pm

Despite being barely twenty-years old, the public Internet has significantly transformed modes of capital distribution, communication potentialities, and means of political action. Given how the Internet has, and continues to, shape interactions between citizens, governments, and corporations it has attracted considerable political attention. Citizens use Internet-based communications to organize protests, to develop novel innovations, and ‘out’ illegal or unethical governmental and corporate behaviors. Governments often push for laws that forbid, censor, or watch for certain communications. Corporations rely on networks to improve efficiency, monitor current and future consumers, and disaggregate their labor forces. All major dimensions of Western societies are, in some manner or another, drawn into or towards the expanded capacities that Internet-based action affords.

This course investigates some of the most significant dimensions and activities that are inextricably linked to the Internet. We begin by delving into the various politics and issues surrounding a ‘populist’ Internet concept, network neutrality. This concept will serve as a launchpad to explore and evaluate competing issues and concepts, such as copyright and free speech, privacy and security, and surveillance and censorship: how do these issues relate to one another, and to conceptions of network neutrality more generally? As we will learn, many of the issues surrounding the politics of the Internet have direct implications for one another. The course is attentive to North American politics, though extends to consider analyses and issues in Europe and further abroad. As an outcome, by the end of this course we will have a more nuanced understanding of what is at stake when politically inclined actors propose new regulations that would affect the Internet, or demand the repeal of existing regulations.

The course is broken into seven discrete sections, with one section being explored each week. We begin with an introduction to the term ‘network neutrality’, and will investigate the overlapping political agendas that are often bound in the term. Our aim will be to establish a founding term that can be referenced, theoretically developed, and critiqued as the term unfolds. We then move to discuss critical infrastructure, including a brief discussion on the technical characteristics of the Internet and the politics surrounding its ongoing functionality. Our discussion of infrastructure follows with explorations of more familiar areas of politics: copyright and free expression, privacy and security, economics, and surveillance and censorship. We devote a week to each of these

issue areas and, as will be evident, many of them overlap with one another in significant ways. It is expected that students will, by the end of the sixth week, have an appreciation for how taking action on one issue – perhaps free expression – can have effects on other issues – such as security or censorship. Our final week is devoted to the issue of Internet governance. In addition to drawing together work from earlier weeks, we will consider the role of the nation-state and the *kinds* of values that we think could be used to understand and direct the governance of the Internet.

While many of the authors we encounter are from the field of political science proper, others are from the fields of law, philosophy, and communication. The study of the Internet is almost inherently interdisciplinary; as such, we will rely a diverse set of voices and experiences to help us understand the complexity and subtleties of Internet governance issues. Throughout we will be attentive to the politics of issues, while also being regularly reminded about the cultural, legal, and theoretical dimensions associated with this diverse area of study.

Collegiality and Academic Integrity

In the spirit of collegiality, please come to class on time and do not disrupt the class with late arrivals or early departures. Laptops are permitted in the classroom; please use them respectfully to conduct course business as opposed to playing games, frivolously surfing the web, and so forth. Please avoid plagiarism at all costs, as it is a violation of the ethical code of the University and will result in a failing grade for the plagiarized assignment.

Please familiarize yourselves with UVic's policy on plagiarism, here:

<http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2012/FACS/UnIn/UARe/PoAcI.html>

Evaluation

Your grade will consist of a series of critical synopses of course material, one seminar-leading presentation, and a short written position statement. Each is described in full detail, below. The underlying purpose of these assignments are for you to demonstrate a strong grasp of the texts and concepts we are dealing with, and to provide a clear and critical understanding of how they relate to one another, as well as to bridge links between class material and your own theoretical and empirical interests.

You are expected to complete *at least* 5 synopsis papers, 1 presentation, and 1 position statement in order to obtain a passing grade for the course. **Failure to complete these assignments will result in a 'N' grade.** Late synopsis papers will receive a grade of 0, whereas position statement papers will be penalized 5% a day. If you anticipate a problem completing an assignment by a due date you must discuss this with me at least two weeks prior to it being due. Extensions will not be granted unless you have a good, and documented, reason.

- A) Synopsis Papers: 6% each**
- B) Presentation: 30%**
- C) Position Statement: 30%**
- D) Participation/Engagement in Class: 10%**

A) Synopsis Papers (6% each; 30% total)

Synopsis papers are meant to demonstrate your engagement with the week's readings. You will write a total of 5 of these papers, from weeks 2-7. Your synopses should critically identify key issues in the week's readings and offer 1-2 critical questions, insights, critiques, or syntheses of what you have read. You must bring these papers to class, each day, and be prepared to contribute the thoughts and reflections embedded in these papers. Evaluation is based on successful identification of key concepts and issues and critical approach taken to the week's texts.

Hardcopy versions of each synopsis will be handed in, by the person who wrote it, at the end of designated classes.

You only need to write 5 of these papers. This leaves you the option of *either* writing 6, and the lowest grade is disregarded, *or* only handing in 5 papers, total. If you choose the latter, you are still expected to come to class prepared on the week you do not submit a synopsis and productively engage with your colleagues.

B) Presentation (30%)

This course includes one major presentation in which you will lead elements of the seminar. They will be 25-30 minutes in length. You will introduce key elements of the readings while raising problematics or critiques; thus you will need to identify key concepts, points of contention, and raise issues or questions surrounding the concepts or issues you have read about. Presenters will be expected to go somewhat beyond readings to provide additional background for readings, but this will be done in consultation with me. **Students are expected to meet with me at least two business days prior to presenting.** Evaluation is based on the quality of engaging the class, capturing of key issues in the readings, and identifying interesting and provocative issues surrounding the readings.

C) Position Statement (30%)

The position statement will identify a key issue that we have raised in class and make a short argument that establishes your critical perspective on the issue. **Students are advised to consult with me about the topic of these statements at least 2 weeks before they are due.** These statements are expected to be referenced and are 6-7 pages long, double-spaced. The statements will be evaluated on how effectively you identify and explain your chosen issue, your capacity to raise critical questions, and proposed means of engaging with the issue on an ongoing basis.

D) Participation/Engagement in Class (10%)

Evaluation of class participation is based on the quality of your contributions to the class throughout the term. This will require you *come to class prepared to discuss class readings* with an eagerness to engage presentations and discussions with your peers. You are especially encouraged to open up questions and problems for the class as a group to work through.

Texts

Required

Jack Goldsmith and Tim Wu. *Who Controls the Internet? Illusions of a Borderless World*
Langdon Winner. *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High
Technology*

Milton Mueller. *Networks and States: The Global Politics of Internet Governance*

All other required texts are either available online or through the library's website. Many of the non-book texts are available at the following URL: XXXX. The password for the linked .zip file is "XXXX", without the quotation marks.

I will make available another .zip file with additional readings a day or two after the class begins and share the URL with you.

Suggested

Abbate, Janet. (1999). *Inventing the Internet*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.

Farivar, Cyrus. (2011). *The Internet of Elsewhere*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Lessig, Lawrence. (2006). *Code: Version 2.0*. New York: Basic Books.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Network Neutrality

Introduction, and Network Neutrality 101

- Goldsmith, Jack and Tim Wu. (2006). Chapters 2-3 (pp. 13-46). *Who Controls the Internet? Illusions of a Borderless World*. Toronto: Oxford University Press. (33 pages)

Week 2: Critical infrastructure (74 pages total)

- Morris Jr., John B. (2011). "Injecting the Public Interest into Internet Studies," in Laura DeNardis (ed). *Opening Standards: The Global Politics of Interoperability*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press. Pp 3-12. (9 pages).
- Winner, Langdon. (1986). "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" in *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 45-62. (17 pages).
- Winner, Langdon. (1986). "Decentralization Clarified?" in *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 85-97. (12 pages).
- Mueller, Milton. (2010). "Critical Internet Resources," in *Networks and States: The Global Politics of Internet Governance*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press. Pp. 215-252. (37 pages)

Week 3: Copyright and Freedom of Expression (70 pages total)

- Netanel, Neil Weinstock. (2008). "What is Free Speech (and How Does It Bear on Copyright?)" in *Copyright's Paradox*. Toronto: Oxford University Press. Pp. 30-53. (23 pages)
- Boyle, James. (2008). "The Internet Threat," in *The Public Domain: Enclosing the Commons of the Mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Pp. 54-82. (28 pages). Available at: <http://thepublicdomain.org/thepublicdomain1.pdf>
- Mueller, Milton. (2010). "Content Regulation," in *Networks and States: The Global Politics of Internet Governance*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press. Pp. 185-214 (19 pages).

Week 4: Privacy and Security (82 pages total)

- Bennett, Colin. (2001). "Cookies, web bugs, webcams, and cue cats: Patterns of surveillance on the world wide web," *Ethics and Information Technology* 3(3). Pp. 197-210. (13 pages). Available from library databases
- Mueller, Milton. (2010). "Security Governance on the Internet," in *Networks and States: The Global Politics of Internet Governance*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press. Pp. 159-184. (25 pages).
- Winner, Langdon. (1986). "Mythinformation" in *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 98-117. (19 pages).
- Mitrou, Lilian. (2008). "Communications Data Retention: A Pandora's Box for Rights and Liberties," in Alessandro Acquisti et al (eds). *Digital Privacy: Theory, Technologies, and Practices*. New York: Auerbach Publications. Pp. 409-434. (25 pages). Available at: http://www.ittoday.info/Articles/Communications_Data_Retention.pdf

Week 5: Economics (95 pages total)

- Parsons et al. (2011). "The Open Internet: Open for Business and Economic Growth," *Casting and Open Net: A Leading-Edge Approach to Canada's Digital Future*. Available: http://openmedia.ca/sites/openmedia.ca/files/OpenNetReport_ENG_Web_0.pdf. Pp. 102-122. (20 pages).
- Strangelove, Michael. (2005). "The Abnormalization of the Internet," in *The Empire of Mind: Digital Piracy and the Anti-Capitalist Movement*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Pp. 79-98. (19 pages).
- Winseck, Dwayne. (2003). "Netscapes of power: convergence, network design, walled gardens, and other strategies of control in the information age," in David Lyon (ed.). *Surveillance as Social Sorting: Privacy, Risk and Digital Discrimination*. New York: Routledge. Pp. 176-198. (28 pages). Available as eBook through library.
- Mueller, Milton. (2010). "IP versus IP," in *Networks and States: The Global Politics of Internet Governance*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press. Pp. 129-157. (28 pages).

Week 6: Surveillance and Censorship (65/116 pages total)

- Deibert, Ronald and Rafal Rohozinski. (2010). "Beyond Denial," in Ronald Deibert et al. (eds). *Access Controlled: The Shaping of Power, Rights, and Rule in Cyberspace*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press. Pp. 3-14. (11 pages). Available at: <http://www.access-controlled.net/wp-content/PDFs/chapter-1.pdf>
- Zuckerman, Ethan. (2010). "Intermediary Censorship," in Ronald Deibert et al. (eds). *Access Controlled: The Shaping of Power, Rights, and Rule in Cyberspace*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press. Pp. 71-86. (15 pages). Available at: <http://www.access-controlled.net/wp-content/PDFs/chapter-5.pdf>
- Winner, Langdon. (1986). "On Not Hitting the Tar-Baby" in *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 138-154. (16 pages).
- Strandburg, Katherine J. (2008). "Surveillance of Emergent Associations: Freedom of Association in a Network Society," in Alessandro Acquisti et al (eds). *Digital Privacy: Theory, Technologies, and Practices*. New York: Auerbach Publications. Pp. 435-458. (23 pages). Version available at: http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1010&context=katherine_strandburg
- HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, NOT REQUIRED. Farivar, Cyrus. (2011). "Iran," in *The Internet of Elsewhere*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. Pp. 150-201. (51 pages).

Week 7: Governance and Values (77 pages total)

- Goldsmith, Jack and Tim Wu. (2006). Chapters 4-5 (pp. 49-86), 8-10 (146-178). *Who Controls the Internet? Illusions of a Borderless World*. Toronto: Oxford University Press. (69 pages).
- Winner, Langdon. (1986). "Brandy, Cigars, and Human Values" in *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 155-163. (8 pages).