Science, Technology, and Society (STAS) 423 – Lecture 01
Politics and Technology
Winter 2014
Tues 14:00-16:45

Instructor: Dr. Patrick Feng

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Office Hours: Thursdays 11:00-12:00
or by appointment

Course Description

Politics and technology shape our day-to-day lives. Their importance can hardly be overstated, yet the relationship between the two is seldom questioned. This course will examine the relationship between politics and technology, and how they shape and structure everyday life. We will look at politics broadly, examining not only the use of technology in politics (e.g., the use of new media in political campaigns) but also how political values become embedded within technological systems. Particular attention will be paid to the ways in which technological decision-making fits or does not fit with democratic ideals.

Topics to be discussed include democracy and technology; theories of political action; technologies as forms of governance; the use of new media in politics; online activism; the role of international organizations in governing technology.

Note: There will be some flexibility in topics to allow for customization based on students' interests. We will discuss this during the first class.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of the course students should:

- Be conversant with major theories about politics, technology, and how the two interact;

- Be able to critically analyze the political dimensions of technological use and development, including the social, legal, and ethical implications of using (or not using) certain kinds of technologies;

- Be able to research and write persuasively about an issue of personal interest relating to politics and technology.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Students are welcome to bring laptops and other devices to class so long as these are used to aid student learning. During class, it is not acceptable to play games, answer email, surf the web, or engage in other non-class activities. Cell phone use is not permitted. Inappropriate use of such technologies not only negatively affects you; it also distracts other students and undermines our goal of creating a respectful learning environment.

Textbooks and Readings:

No textbook is required for this class. Instead, readings will be made available online through the U of C library (linked via Blackboard).

Assignments and Evaluation

Students will be graded based on the following components:

- Reading responses (2)   20%   *weeks 2-5*
- Group presentation   25%   *weeks 6-8*
- Participation   10%   *ongoing throughout the term*
- Research paper   45%   *due week 13*

Note that there is no final exam in this course.

Brief description of assignments

- **Reading responses:** In weeks 2-5, students will have the opportunity to prepare a brief written response (500-1000 words) to one or more of the assigned readings. Your response should summarize the key points of the readings and present your reactions to them. To further class discussion and collaboration, students will post their responses to Blackboard so that classmates can read and comment on them. A total of two reading responses are due.

- **Group presentation:** Working in groups of 2-3, students will choose a topic and prepare a 20-minute presentation to the rest of the class. Presentations will take place in late February and early March. Each group will also submit a brief written report on the topic. Students will be assessed as a group, i.e., all group members receive the same mark.

- **Participation:** Seminar classes require everyone to come prepared and contribute to the class discussion. Effective participation requires you to critically engage with ideas in the readings and to listen and respond to ideas presented by your classmates. An effective participant is not simply someone who talks a lot, but rather is someone who facilitates discussion, offers thoughtful insights, and helps others learn.

- **Research paper:** This constitutes the main assignment of the class. Each student is to write a 15-20 page (~4000-5000 words) research paper on a topic that builds upon concepts and ideas introduced in the course. Students are encouraged to choose a topic that relates to their personal interests. Topics must be approved in advance by the instructor no later than February 11 (preferably sooner).

  Notes:

  - Submit a research proposal by February 4 and an annotated bibliography by March 11. These count for 5% of the research paper grade.

  - Research papers are due at the beginning of class on April 8.

  - Students will share their work with classmates by giving a 10-minute informal presentation on April 8. Presentations will not be graded.

Detailed instructions for this and other assignments will be provided on Blackboard.

Note: All assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor. It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: NO

Please note: If your class is held in the evening, the Registrar's Office will make every attempt to schedule the final exam during the evening; however, there is NO guarantee that the exam will NOT be scheduled during the day.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence**, students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.**

For more information see also http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy**.**

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support

Grading System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages

or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link; http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your

research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site:
http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:
http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/ethics/cfreb

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

A detailed schedule will be handed out on the first day of class.