

Geopolitics and the Internet

Friday 10:50 – 12:30 | QS A-215

2021-22 Fall Term

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Office Hours: TBD

Course Description

Recent debates on Internet censorship and the role of the state in online communications highlight concerns about sovereignty, borders, and territory in a globalizing world. This course will emphasize challenges to conventional geopolitical narratives and state pushback to those challenges as central to understanding 21st century geopolitics. We begin by reviewing recent critical literature in geopolitics, challenging existing narratives of what we see geopolitically and why as well as pushing against conventional understandings of sovereignty. We then examine the history of the Internet, cyberconflict, towards modern state interpretations of borders and sovereignty on the Internet. This course will conclude by looking at alternative geopolitics through resistance and revolution online. The course will then explore the ways in which geopolitical narratives, technology, and the territorial state have encountered the Internet and implications for Internet governance, human rights, and free expression.

Course Texts

All course texts will be posted on the class website. Students are strongly encouraged to download and print out the readings instead of reading from their computers. Reading a physical copy contributes to superior comprehension. Printing out copies of the readings can be done at the computer labs or the SPP main office.

Course Structure

This course is designed as a student-centric graduate seminar. There is no hand-holding. What you get out of this class will be precisely what you put into it.

Assignments - Please note that all papers will be submitted through the TurnItIn system!

Discussion & Forum Participation

This course has a strong participation component, and you are expected to discuss the readings, films, lectures, and class comments at every class meeting. If you are uncomfortable doing this, please consider dropping the course as it is an important component of your grade.

An important part of the course grade consists of weekly class web forum participation. Students must post at minimum one question or comment per week related to the readings or news events related to the class. Ideally this will be something you are interested in discussing during class. These must be posted to the forums by 12 PM the day before class. Posts which are late will be marked as a zero.

Papers

This course has multiple options for your term papers. This is designed to give students flexibility in approaching the subject in a way which will benefit their academic and professional goals. You will either do a separate policy brief and choose to do a media or personal data analysis paper OR you will submit a combined policy brief and media or personal data analysis paper. Please note that for all papers you are allowed to go over the wordcount.

CHOOSE ONE:

Media Analysis (1,250 words)

Policy is influenced by media, art, and culture. You will be expected to prepare a short media analysis and analyze some aspect of media (movie, books, video game, poetry, photography, etc.!) from a critical standpoint. This analysis will discuss the broader themes from the angle of class lecture, discussion, readings, and how they fit in with public policy. For instance: how is policy represented in the chosen media? How can the chosen media influence policy?

Personal Data Analysis (1,250 words)

Personal data has become increasingly weaponized as states seek to destabilize other states through targeted advertising and disinformation on social media. For this assignment you'll download your social media data and analyze it.

Once you've looked through your data, you'll examine it to see how accurate it reflects who you are. For example, my Twitter data says I'm interested in women's cosmetics, which I am not, but also that I'm interested in Books and Literature, which I am. In your analysis you'll be looking to address some of the following questions:

- 1) How accurate is your data profile? Were there any surprises?
- 2) How could a foreign power utilize this data as part of a disinformation campaign?
- 3) How can you balance a private social media company's need for profit versus its social obligations?
- 4) Now that you've seen your data and know what it looks like, from a cybersecurity perspective how should a) policymakers, b) civil society, c) governments, and d) individuals engage with this "brave new world" of big personal data?

In addition, your paper should include at least one policy recommendation and discussion related to your findings.

REQUIRED:

Policy Brief (1,250 words)

Students will be expected to prepare a policy brief on a course topic of their choice, approved by the professor. This paper will take some aspect of the course subject and provide a policy brief on the issue with recommendations. Students will be expected to provide a brief background of the topic, discuss the current policy situation, discuss policy options, provide a recommendation, and discuss potential outcomes of the recommendation.

OPTIONAL:

Combined Paper (2,400 words – a 100 word discount!)

Can be done INSTEAD of separate media analysis and policy brief. Instead of a policy brief AND media analysis, students can opt to **combine** both the policy brief and media analysis into one paper. This paper would integrate media into a policy brief to provide a more substantial discussion of a course-related related topic. For example, students can examine one of the movies we watched, demonstrate how policy was implemented in the film, and then use that as a basis for developing a new policy moving forward in greater depth.

Media Analysis Recommendations:

To make things easier, here is a list of possible films for your media analysis. This is a starting point – you can examine media beyond films: books, poetry, photography, video games, street art, paintings, etc. If there are additional media which interest you, please discuss with the professor!

Some recommended films:

Syriana The Fog of War Black Code The Lives of Others Zero Days Zero Dark Thirty The Fifth Estate	WarGames We Are Legion Lo & Behold: Reveries of the Connected World The Great Hack The Social Dilemma The Perfect Weapon The Cleaners Coded Bias
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Class Policies

- All university policies relating to plagiarism, cheating, harassment, etc. will be fully enforced.
- SPP policy is to fail students with more than one unexcused absence for a 2-credit course and more than two unexcused absences for a 4-credit course. Alternatively, final grades may be lowered in proportion to unexcused absences.
- **Be respectful to other students and to yourself.**
- I am an understanding individual. If there are things happening in your life which may prevent you from being successful in class, please come speak with me. I am on your side.
- The instructor reserves the right to change this syllabus at any time.

Breakdown of final grade by assignments:

Policy Paper =	35%
Media Analysis =	30%
Class Discussion =	20%
Forum Participation =	15%

Reading Schedule

The following reading schedule is subject to change. Students will be held responsible only for those readings posted on the class website. Normally these will be posted at least a week in advance.

Week 1 (Sept. 24): Introduction

Class introductions, course outline.

Week 2 (Oct. 1): What is Geopolitics?

Agnew, J. (2003). *Geopolitics: Re-visioning World Politics* (2 edition). Routledge. (p. 1-83)

Kuus, M. (2010). Critical geopolitics. *The international studies encyclopedia*, 2, 683-701.

Rak, J. (2017) Russia, "Near Abroad", and the West: Struggling with the Research Field of Geopolitical Cultures, *Geopolitics*, 22:4, 984-990

Tuathail, G. Ó. (1999). Understanding critical geopolitics: Geopolitics and risk society. *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 22(2-3), 107-124.

Week 3 (Oct. 8): What is Geopolitics? Part II

Agnew, J. (2005). Sovereignty regimes: territoriality and state authority in contemporary world politics. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 95(2), 437-461.

Agnew, J. (2007). No borders, no nations: making Greece in Macedonia. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 97(2), 398-422.

Agnew, J. (2009). Making the strange familiar: Geographical analogy in global geopolitics. *Geographical Review*, 99(3), 426-443.

Bachmann, V., & Toal, G. (2019). Geopolitics—Thick and Complex. A conversation with Gerard Toal. *Erdkunde*, 73, 143-155.

Elden, S. (2010). Land, terrain, territory. *Progress in Human Geography*, 34(6), 799-817.

Week 4 (Oct. 15): Movie and Discussion

Week 5 (Oct. 22): Contemporary geopolitics

Agnew, J. (2003). *Geopolitics: Re-visioning World Politics* (2 edition). Routledge. (pp. 84-132)

Cowie, J. (2011). Geopolitics of Internet Infrastructure. *Cyber Law*, <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/events/luncheon/2011/11/cowie>

Elden, S. (2013). Secure the volume: Vertical geopolitics and the depth of power. *Political Geography*, 34, 35-51

Larkin, S. P. (2019, August 21). The Age of Transparency. *Foreign Affairs*.

Moore, D., & Rid, T. (2016). Cryptopolitik and the Darknet. *Survival*, 58(1), 7–38.

Martin Müller (2020) In Search of the Global East: Thinking between North and South, *Geopolitics*, 25:3, 734-7

Please bring in issues you are interested in discussing! Students should bring 1 issue into class.

OPTIONAL: Jones, S. (2014). Ukraine: Russia’s new art of war. *Financial Times*, 28.

Kofman, M., & Rojansky, M. (2015). A closer look at Russia’s “Hybrid War”. *Kennan Cable*, 1(7).

Tuathail, G. Ó., & Agnew, J. (2014). Geopolitics and discourse. *Geopolitics: An Introductory Reader*, 129.

Week 6 (Oct. 29): Geographies of the Internets

Baraniuk, C. (2016). Why the forgotten Soviet internet was doomed from the start. from <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20161026-why-the-forgotten-soviet-internet-was-doomed-from-the-start>

Goldsmith, J., & Wu, T. (2008). *Who Controls the Internet?: Illusions of a Borderless World*. New York: Oxford University Press. (Chapter 3)

Maréchal, N. (2017). Networked authoritarianism and the geopolitics of information: Understanding Russian Internet policy. *Media and Communication*, 5(1), 29–41.

O’Hara, K., & Hall, W. (2018). Four Internets: The geopolitics of digital governance.

Peters, B. (2016). How the Soviets invented the internet and why it didn’t work – Benjamin Peters | Aeon Essays., from <https://aeon.co/essays/how-the-soviets-invented-the-internet-and-why-it-didn-t-work>

Segal, A. (2019, December 2). When China Rules the Web. *Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-08-13/when-china-rules-web>

Sherman, J. (2021). Cyber defense across the ocean floor: The geopolitics of submarine cable security. The Atlantic Council.

Warner, M. 2012. Cybersecurity: a pre-history. *Intelligence and National Security* 27 (5):781–799.

Week 7 (Nov. 5): Internet Control and Censorship

Chang, C.-C., & Lin, T.-H. (2020). Autocracy login: Internet censorship and civil society in the digital age. *Democratization*, 27(5), 874–895.

Mueller, M. L. (2019). Against Sovereignty in Cyberspace. *International Studies Review*.

Mozur, P., & ur-Rehman, Z. (2021, August 20). How the Taliban Turned Social Media Into a Tool for Control. *The New York Times*.

Rundle, M., & Birdling, M. (2008). Filtering and the international system: A question of commitment. *Access denied: The practice and policy of global Internet filtering*, 73.

Shahbaz, A., & Funk, A. (2020). Freedom on the Net 2020: The Pandemic's Digital Shadow. Freedom House.

Taye, B. (2020). Targeted, Cut Off, and Left in the Dark: The #KeepItOn report on internet shutdowns in 2019. Access Now.

Warf, B. (2015). The Hermit Kingdom in cyberspace: unveiling the North Korean internet. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(1), 109-120.

Zittrain, J. L., Faris, R., Noman, H., Clark, J., Tilton, C., & Morrison-Westphal, R. (2017). The Shifting Landscape of Global Internet Censorship (Harvard Public Law Working Paper No. 17–38).

OPTIONAL: Deibert, R. (2009). The geopolitics of internet control: Censorship, sovereignty, and cyberspace. *The Routledge handbook of internet politics*, 323-336.

Week 8 (Nov. 12): Cyberconflict

Gross, M. J. (2011). A declaration of cyber-war. *Vanity Fair*, 53(4).

Gross, M. J. (2013). Silent War. *Vanity Fair*, (July).

Kaiser, R. (2015). The birth of cyberwar. *Political Geography*, 46, 11–20.

Temple-Raston, D. (2021, April 16). A “Worst Nightmare” Cyberattack: The Untold Story Of The SolarWinds Hack. NPR.

Zetter, K. (2014). An unprecedented look at Stuxnet, the world's first digital weapon. *Wired.com*. November, 3, 14.

Zetter, K. (2016). Inside the cunning, unprecedented hack of Ukraine's power grid. *WIRED*, March, 3, 2016.

Week 9 (Nov. 19): Movie & Discussion

Week 10 (Nov. 26): Espionage, Sabotage, and Surveillance: The Realities of Power Online

Crete-Nishihata, M., Dalek, J., Maynier, E., & Scott-Railton, J. (2018). Spying on a Budget: Inside a Phishing Operation with Targets in the Tibetan Community. <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/95423>

Greenberg, A. (2018, August 22). The Untold Story of NotPetya, the Most Devastating Cyberattack in History. *Wired*. <https://www.wired.com/story/notpetya-cyberattack-ukraine-russia-code-crashed-the-world/>

Hill, K. (2020, January 18). The Secretive Company That Might End Privacy as We Know It. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/18/technology/clearview-privacy-facial-recognition.html>

Lewis, J. (2015). 'Compelling Opponents to Our Will': The Role of Cyber Warfare in Ukraine in *Cyber war in perspective: Russian aggression against Ukraine*. Tallinn: CCDCOE.

O'Neill, P. (2020, August 19). Inside NSO, Israel's billion-dollar spyware giant. *MIT Technology Review*.

Priest, D., Timberg, C., & Mekhennet, S. (2021, July 18). Private Israeli spyware used to hack cellphones of journalists, activists worldwide. *Washington Post*.

OPTIONAL: Warf, B., & Fekete, E. (2015). Relational geographies of cyberterrorism and cyberwar. *Space and Polity*, 1-15.

Week 11 (Dec. 3): Alternative Geopolitics

Andrews, S., Burrough, B., & Ellison, S. (2014). The Snowden saga: A shadowland of secrets and light. *Vanity Fair*.

Arun, C. (2019). AI and the Global South: Designing for Other Worlds.

Binder, E. (2019, August 30). Hong Kong Protesters Spy a New Enemy: Lampposts. *Wall Street Journal*.

Deibert, R. (2015) "The geopolitics of cyberspace after Snowden." *Current History* 114.768: 9.

Ghani, A., & Khan, S. (2019). The internet as we see it: Gendered perceptions from Pakistan. Retrieved from Association for Progressive Communications

Gladwell, M. 2010. Small Change. *The New Yorker*.

Golkar, S. 2011. Liberation or Suppression Technologies? The Internet, the Green Movement and the Regime in Iran. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies & Society* 9 (1).

Gu, C. Y. (2020). Peering past the firewall: The gender of disobedience and social control in Mainland China. *Feminist Media Studies*, 20(2), 290–293.

Penney, J., McKune, S., Gill, L., & Deibert, R. J. (2018). Advancing human-rights-by-design in the dual-use technology industry. *Journal of International Affairs*, 71(2), 103–110.

Zinn, C., & Chengeta, G. (2020). Making a Feminist Internet: Movement building in a digital age in Africa. Association for Progressive Communications. <https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/making-feminist-internet-movement-building-digital-age-africa>

OPTIONAL: Deibert, R., and R. Rohozinski. 2011. Contesting cyberspace and the coming crisis of authority. *Deibert et al., Access Contested* :21–41.

OPTIONAL: Stepanova, E. 2011. The role of information communication technologies in the “arab spring.” *Implications beyond the Region. Washington, DC: George Washington University (PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo no. 159.*

Week 12 (Dec. 10): The Future

Bergman, R., & Fassihi, F. (2021, September 18). The Scientist and the A.I.-Assisted, Remote-Control Killer Robot. *The New York Times*.

Clarke, R. A. (2020, October 5). Will We Have Cyberwar or Cyber Peace? *Wall Street Journal*. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/will-we-have-cyberwar-or-cyber-peace-11601910082>

Citron, D., & Chesney, R. (2020, June 29). Deepfakes and the New Disinformation War. *Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2018-12-11/deepfakes-and-new-disinformation-war>

Deibert, R. J., & Pauly, L. W. (2019). Mutual entanglement and complex sovereignty in cyberspace. *Data Politics*, 81.

Mozur, P. (2019, April 14). One Month, 500,000 Face Scans: How China Is Using A.I. to Profile a Minority (Published 2019). *The New York Times*.

Wright, N. (2019, October 11). How Artificial Intelligence Will Reshape the Global Order. *Foreign Affairs*.

Zarrelli, N. (2021, May 13). The Movement to Protect Your Mind From Brain-Computer Technologies. *Gizmodo*.