

# The Internet and Human Rights

2023 Spring Term

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## Course Description

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights articulates the rights of individuals to “...seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” The Internet has had a substantial impact on the ability of individuals to receive and impart information, but it has also empowered state and non-state actors to deny that right in pursuit of political or social goals. Beyond freedom of expression, the Internet is a relatively young frontier where human rights are both realized and challenged. This course will examine the Internet as a contested space for human rights from activist and state perspectives as well as the impact of the Internet on freedom of expression, gender, hate speech, privacy, and more. Finally, the course will look at the interplay between artificial intelligence and human rights as this important technology assumes a greater role in the modern world.

## Course Texts

All course texts will be posted on the class website. Students are strongly encouraged to 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 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.

#### Media Analysis (1,250 words)

**REQUIRED.** 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)

**REQUIRED.** Personal data has become an increasingly contested field in the right to privacy. 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.

#### Policy Brief (1,250 words)

**REQUIRED.** 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 1-3 recommendations, and discuss the potential outcomes of their recommendations including benefits and how their proposals might not work as intended.

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

**OPTIONAL.** Instead of a policy brief AND media/personal data analysis, students can opt to **combine** both the policy and media/personal data analysis into one paper. This paper would integrate media or discussion about their personal data into a policy brief to provide a more substantial discussion of an Internet and Human Rights 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 a bit easier, here is a list of approved films for your media analysis. This is a starting point – you can examine any aspect of media beyond films: books, poetry, photography, video games, street art, paintings, etc. This list is open to suggestions, and if there are additional media which you feel may be relevant, please discuss with the professor!

We Are Legion: The Story of the Hacktivists  
BurmaVJ  
We Steal Secrets  
The Fifth Estate  
CitizenFour  
The Lives of Others  
Black Code  
The Cleaners (2018)

### Class Policies

- All university policies relating to plagiarism, cheating, harassment, etc. will be fully enforced.
- Late papers without a valid written excuse lose 10% of their grade per day after the deadline.
- 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.

### **Relevant Articles in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):**

- Article 2 (right to remedy)
- Article 17 (Privacy)
- Article 19 (Freedom of Expression and Opinion)
- Article 20 (hate speech)
- Article 26 (non-discrimination)

### **Breakdown of final grade:**

<b>Policy Paper =</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Media Analysis =</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Class Discussion =</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Forum Participation =</b>	<b>15%</b>

## **Reading Schedule**

The following reading and course schedule is subject to change. Students are responsible only for those readings posted on the class website.

### **Session 1: Introduction & Movie**

Class introductions, course outline. Overview of topic. Discussion of assigned film.

### **Session 2: Human Rights & the Internet: An Overview**

Cerf, Vinton G. "Internet access is not a human right." *New York Times* 4 (2012): 25-26.

Feldstein, Steven. 2019. "The Road to Digital Unfreedom: How Artificial Intelligence Is Reshaping Repression." *Journal of Democracy* 30 (1): 40–52.

Jensen, Steven. "The 1968 United Nations Debate on Human Rights and Tech." OpenGlobalRights, August 30, 2022. <https://www.openglobalrights.org/the-1968-United-Nations-debate-on-human-rights-and-tech/>.

Jørgensen, Rikke Frank. "When private actors govern human rights." In *Research Handbook on Human Rights and Digital Technology*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019.

Kendall-Taylor, A., Frantz, E., & Wright, J. (2020, February 18). The Digital Dictators. *Foreign Affairs*.

McCarthy-Jones, Simon. "The Autonomous Mind: The Right to Freedom of Thought in the Twenty-First Century." *Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence* 2 (2019): 19. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frai.2019.00019>.

Morozov, E. (2009). *How the Net Aids Dictatorships*. TED.

Ni, Vincent, Helen Davidson, and Vincent Ni China affairs correspondent. "Outrage over Shutdown of LGBTQ WeChat Accounts in China." *The Guardian*, July 8, 2021, sec. World news. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/08/outrage-over-crackdown-on-lgbtq-wechat-accounts-in-china>.

**OPTIONAL:** Morozov, E. (2009). Iran: Downside to the "Twitter Revolution". *Dissent*, 56(4), 10-14.

### **Session 3: Freedom of Expression and Internet Censorship**

AccessNow. 2021. "The Return of Digital Authoritarianism: Internet Shutdowns in 2021." Access Now.

Alegre, Susie. "Regulating around Freedom in the 'Forum Internum.'" *ERA Forum* 21, no. 4 (January 1, 2021): 591–604. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12027-020-00633-7>.

Chang, Chun-Chih, and Thung-Hong Lin. 2020. "Autocracy Login: Internet Censorship and Civil Society in the Digital Age." *Democratization* 27 (5): 874–95.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1747051>.

Chin, Josh. 2019. "The Internet, Divided Between the U.S. and China, Has Become a Battleground." *Wall Street Journal*, February 9, 2019

Clark, Justin D., et al. "The shifting landscape of global internet censorship." (2017).

Freedom House. (2022). Freedom on the Net 2022: Countering an Authoritarian Overhaul of the Internet.

Li, S. (2020, March 6). Made-in-China Censorship for Sale. *Wall Street Journal*.

Zittrain, J., & Palfrey, J. G. (2007). Internet Filtering: The Politics and Mechanisms of Control. In R. Deibert, J. Palfrey, R. Rohozinski, & J. Zittrain (Eds.), *Access Denied: The practice and policy of global internet filtering* (pp. 29–56). Oxford Internet Institute.

#### **OPTIONAL:**

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.

Warf, B. 2011. Geographies of global Internet censorship. *GeoJournal* 76 (1):1–23.

#### **Session 4: Gender, Sexuality, Cyberhate**

Amnesty International. 2018. "Toxic Twitter: Violence and Abuse Against Women Online." <https://www.amnestyusa.org/online-violence-against-women/>.

Anti-Defamation League. "Hate Is No Game: Hate and Harassment in Online Games 2022." Anti-Defamation League, 2022.

Biddle, S., Ribeiro, P. V., & Dias, T. (2020, March 16). Invisible Censorship: TikTok Told Moderators to Suppress Posts by "Ugly" People and the Poor to Attract New Users. *The Intercept*.

Faris, R., Ashar, A., Gasser, U., & Joo, D. (2016). Understanding Harmful Speech Online.

Hess, Amanda. "Why Women Aren't Welcome on the Internet." *Pacific Standard*, January 6, 2014. <https://psmag.com/social-justice/women-arent-welcome-internet-72170>.

Koirala, Samiksha. "Female journalists' experience of online harassment: A case study of Nepal." *Media and Communication* 8, no. 1 (2020): 47-56.

Hunt, Elle. "Online harassment of women at risk of becoming 'established norm', study finds." *The Guardian*, March 7, 2016.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/mar/08/online-harassment-of-women-at-risk-of-becoming-established-norm-study>.

Naseer, Shirin, and Cameran Ashraf. "Gender-Based Violence in Pakistan's Digital Spaces." *Feminist Legal Studies* (2021): 1-22.

### **Session 5: Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights**

Aizenberg, Evgeni, and Jeroen van den Hoven. "Designing for human rights in AI." *Big Data & Society* 7, no. 2 (2020): 2053951720949566.

Ashraf, Cameran. "Exploring the impacts of artificial intelligence on freedom of religion or belief online." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 26, no. 5 (2022): 757-791.

Council of Europe, Commissioner for Human Rights. "Unboxing Artificial Intelligence: 10 Steps to Protect Human Rights." Council of Europe, May 2019.

David Kaye. 2018. "Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression." A/73/348. United Nations.

Hao, Karen. 2020. "The Problems AI Has Today Go Back Centuries." MIT Technology Review. July 31, 2020. <https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/07/31/1005824/decolonial-ai-for-everyone/>.

Lampell, Zach, and Lily Liu. 2018. "How Can AI Amplify Civic Freedoms?" OpenGlobalRights. Accessed March 10, 2019. <https://www.openglobalrights.org/how-can-AI-amplify-civic-freedoms/>.

Latonero, Mark. 2018. "Governing Artificial Intelligence." *Data & Society*.

Murgia, M., & Murphy, H. (2019, November 8). Can Facebook really rely on artificial intelligence to spot abuse? *Financial Times*.

Privacy International, and Article 19. 2018. "Privacy and Freedom of Expression In the Age of Artificial Intelligence." Privacy International & Article 19.

Raso, Filippo A., Hannah Hilligoss, Vivek Krishnamurthy, Christopher Bavitz, and Levin Kim. 2018. "Artificial Intelligence & Human Rights: Opportunities & Risks." *Berkman Klein Center Research Publication*, no. 2018-6.

### **Session 6: Surveillance, Privacy (and a movie!)**

Arora, P., & Scheiber, L. (2017). Slumdog romance: Facebook love and digital privacy at the margins. *Media, Culture & Society*, 39(3), 408-422. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443717691225>

Chen, Brian X. "I Downloaded the Information That Facebook Has on Me. Yikes." *The New York Times*, 11 Apr. 2018. *NYTimes.com*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/11/technology/personaltech/i-downloaded-the-information-that-facebook-has-on-me-yikes.html>.

Cox, J. (2020, January 27). Leaked Documents Expose the Secretive Market for Your Web Browsing Data. *Vice*. [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/qjdkq7/avast-antivirus-sells-user-browsing-data-investigation](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/qjdkq7/avast-antivirus-sells-user-browsing-data-investigation)

Deibert, Ronald J. "The Autocrat in Your iPhone." *Foreign Affairs*, December 12, 2022. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/autocrat-in-your-iphone-mercenary-spyware-ronald-deibert>.

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>

Mistreanu, Simina. 2018. "China Is Implementing a Massive Plan to Rank Its Citizens, and Many of Them Want In." *Foreign Policy*, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/03/life-inside-chinas-social-credit-laboratory/>.