Laurea / B.A. in Global Governance

Academic Year 2020-2021
Syllabus
Social and Ethical Issues of the Internet
CFU 6
Prof. Laura Brandimarte

Course Description

This class explores the social, legal, cultural, and ethical fallout from the networked world – social networks, blogs, apps, movements, likes, tags, text messages, and comments that three and a half billion Internet users and almost seven billion mobile phone subscriptions emit. Contrasting perspectives are offered in the readings and explored through lectures, student presentations, and online discussion. Special attention is given to issues of privacy and security, as the management of our online persona becomes more challenging and complex.

Living in a networked world generates significant, tangible benefits to the economy and to society as a whole, but at the same time it raises various social and ethical concerns which, while not always tangible or easy to measure, should be taken into consideration. In this course, we will study the privacy and security implications of various technologies, how to address them – both via further technological advances and regulation – as well as other ethical issues associated with them. We will discuss (potentially) privacy-intrusive and privacy-enhancing technologies, and what their respective properties and capabilities are; issues of commercial and government surveillance; recent developments in regulation affecting, among other things, net neutrality; pros and cons of artificial intelligence-enabled product and service personalization. This course will give you a holistic view of privacy and security issues in the world of "big data."

Teaching Method

The course is based on lectures introducing students to a variety of topics related to the impact of technologies on society. Students actively collaborate and cooperate in their learning through group discussions, presentations, forums. Much of the content to be discussed is drawn from current or recent news, as ethical issues (both ordinary and extra-ordinary) of newer and older technologies abound in everyday life. Some topics to be covered are listed below, but students may collaborate in selecting topics of interest, suggesting to skip or add some.

Schedule of Topics

Topic 1	Privacy, Security, Anonymity
Topic 2	Privacy Intrusive Technologies
Topic 3	The Internet of Things
Topic 4	Privacy Enhancing Technologies
Topic 5	Non-Government Surveillance, Targeted Advertising
Topic 6	Government Surveillance
Topic 7	Hacktivism
Topic 8	Research Ethics
Topic 9	Personalization and the Filter Bubble
Topic 10	Ethics of Algorithms and Artificial Intelligence
Topic 11	Ethics of Information Dissemination
Topic 12	Net Neutrality
Topic 13	Privacy Regulation
Topic 14	Privacy and Online Social Networks

Textbook and Materials
There is no unique textbook – all reading material will be made available in digital format at the beginning of class. In addition, each student will be assigned a book to read from the list below, and at the end of the semester everyone will present a final project inspired by the book. More on this in the Assessment section.

List of books for the final project:
The Shallows, by Nicholas Carr
The Black Box Society, by Frank Pasquale
Linked, by Albert-László Barabási
Connected, by Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler
The Smarter Screen, by Shlomo Benartzi
The Second Machine Age, by Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee
Machine, Platform, Crowd, by Andrew McAfee and Erik Brynjolfsson
Obfuscation, by Finn Brunton and Helen Nissenbaum
Data and Goliath, by Bruce Schneier
Click Here to Kill Everybody, by Bruce Schneier
A Dangerous Master, by Wendell Wallach
Irresistible, By Adam Alter
Streaming, Sharing, Stealing, by Michael Smith and Rahul Telang
The Sharing Economy, by Arun Sundararajan
Uberland, by Alex Rosenblat
Automating Inequality, by Virginia Eubanks
The Age of Surveillance Capitalism, by Shoshana Zuboff
Permanent Record, by Edward Snowden
Everything is Obvious, by Duncan Watts
Superintelligence, by Nick Bostrom
Dark Data: Why What You Don't Know Matters, by David J. Hand
The Ethical Algorithm, by Michael Kearns and Aaron Roth
Artificial Unintelligence, by Meredith Broussard
Algorithms of Oppression, by Safiya Umoja Noble
Weapons of Math Destruction, by Cathy O'Neil

Assessment
This course involves many activities, some of them are recurring activities, others will only occur once.
One-off activities:
- **Presentations.** Tentatively each week one or two students are assigned or volunteer to work on a presentation (no longer than 10 minutes) on one of the recommended (i.e., not required) readings.
- **Assignments.** There will be two assignments this semester, both in the form of long essays. The first one is an Information Diary, tentatively due on November 22. The second one pushes you to think about the economic trade-offs associated with information exchanges, tentatively due on December 6.
- **Written exam.** During class time, tentatively December 1st (short essay questions).
- **Final project.** The final project is a creative effort based on a book you will be assigned to read. Each project should include a summary/review of the book, 2 to 5 pages long, but summaries are not the focus of final projects. You need to be creative, which requires commitment and effort. Final projects can be research papers, stories, poems, cartoons, comics, videos, movies, paintings, board games, online games, websites, apps, hacking tools… pretty much anything creative you can think of. The topic of your final project needs to be based on the book you are assigned, but let me stress again that summaries are not all that we are after – they are only a small part of the project. You may work in groups of maximum 2 people but

each of you must read the entire book, or else it would be impossible to follow along and understand the message the book sends.

At the end of the semester, you will have 15 minutes to present your final project during class: we will adjust our schedule so everyone or every group can present.

Recurring activities:

- **Attendance.** Students are expected to inform the instructor if they miss or expect to miss a class session for a good reason. As in other GG courses, 80% attendance is required. Active participation is required by all in discussions during class meetings; infrequent or low-quality participation will diminish the final grade.
- **Key questions about readings.** Be prepared to pose a question about the current reading or topic, and to discuss it, at each class meeting. Put thought into a question that would enrich our face-to-face inquiry into the week's theme.
- **Weekly quizzes.** For each topic, join the class prepared to answer a few multiple choice questions about the readings.

Most simply: do every assignment given to you, and do it in a better-than-perfunctory manner, and you will get at least a B. Do every assignment in a more-or-less excellent fashion, you will get at least an A-.

In the table below, a grade percentage shows how grades will be distributed. The Instructor will be tracking your performance, but the numbers are not all there is to the story. Your grade will depend on the quality of your classroom participation, online group conversations, and demonstration of diligently engaging with the assignments and learning activities. You are also welcome to meet with the Instructor remotely to get a sense of how you are performing and to brainstorm ways to improve during the semester. The Instructor is always available via email to discuss the course, issues related to the course content, and your learning.

Activities	% on Final Grade
Class Participation	
Attendance and discussion	5%
Quizzes	10%
Presentation	5%
Assignments	
Assignment 1	10%
Assignment 2	15%
Written Exam	20%
Final Project	35%

Office hours
Contact email address: lbrandimarte@arizona.edu.
Contact the Instructor via email to schedule remote meetings.

NOTE: Erasmus or non Global Governance students who would like to attend one or more courses and take one or more exams need to contact the Secretariat of Global Governance by e-mail global.governance@uniroma2.it for registration and inform the Professor of the course. They are required to sign a code of conduct like all Global Governance students, accepting all values and rules. Please read it carefully before enrolling.

Notice that attendance is required from the very first lesson and you need to attend at least 80% of the course to be considered an attending student.