

POL 106 H1F 2025

Democracy in the Social Media Age
Department of Political Science, University of Toronto

Course Instructor: Irene Poetranto, Ph.D.
Weekly Lecture: Wednesdays, 11:10 to 13:00
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 13:00 to 14:00
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Course Description

The Internet and social media are the predominant means by which most of the world communicates, seeks, and receives information today. The configuration of the Internet and social media, as well as the governance of these communication technologies, have significantly influenced our society and politics. Internet platforms and infrastructure are also important sites of political struggles, and are subject to varying state control and interference mechanisms. This course examines the relationship between democracy and the Internet, as well as social media. We will explore the underlying business model of social media, commonly referred to as “surveillance capitalism,” and discuss how this business model distorts democratic processes and infringes upon civil liberties. We will study the threats that disinformation and other forms of information manipulation and control pose to democracy, and examine the often-overlooked psychosocial impacts of the Internet and social media. Students are expected to attend the weekly lecture and tutorial sessions and complete all required readings before the start of lectures. Tutorial participation is mandatory. Assignments, tutorials, and mid-term and final exams are designed to help students learn the subject matter, develop critical thinking skills, and enhance their verbal and written communication skills.

Course Overview and Requirements

Tutorials (mandatory)

Participation in tutorials are mandatory. Students must sign-up for tutorials on ACORN.

Tutorials are led by teaching assistants (TAs), who are graduate students in the Department of Political Science. Tutorials provide students with opportunities to discuss and reflect on course content in small groups. Students are expected to have read all of the required readings before tutorials begin, participate actively in discussions, and engage with the major themes or topics in the course.

Writing-Integrated Teaching (WIT)

POL106 is part of the Faculty of Arts & Science's award-winning [WIT program](#), which helps instructors and academic units embed discipline-specific writing instruction into undergraduate courses and programs. Therefore, WIT materials and activities are integrated into tutorials in the course. The University of Toronto expects its students to write well, and WIT is among many resources provided to students to help improve their writing skills. [Click here](#) to read more about writing at U of T.

Grading Scheme

Type	Details	Worth
Participation	Tutorial participation is mandatory. Six tutorial sessions in total.	10.00%
Quiz	Quiz about POL106. Due on Oct. 8.	10.00%
Essays	Two critical reflection essays (2 x 15%) due on Fridays.	30.00%
Mid-Term Test	The test will be in-person on Oct. 15, 11 AM - 1 PM	15.00%
Final Exam	The test will take place during the exam period in December	35.00%
	Total	100.00%

Table 1. Course requirements for POL106

Exams will be held in-person. All assignments must be submitted on Quercus. In case of technical difficulties, you may submit your assignment via email to your assigned TA **before** the deadline. Assignments must be submitted before the deadline and can be opened or downloaded by the grader; otherwise, the late penalty will be applied.

Course Schedule by Week

Week #	Date	Tutorial #	Topic
1	Sep-3	1	Introduction to POL106
2	Sep-10	No tutorials	Politics in the social media age
3	Sep-17	2	Right to privacy
4	Sep-24	No tutorials	Right to free expression
5	Oct-1	3	Space, surveillance, and democracy
6	Oct-8	No tutorials	Information controls in the digital age
7	Oct-15		Mid-Term Test
8	Oct-22	4	Social media regulation and platform (un)accountability
	Oct-29	Reading Week (no classes, no tutorials, and no office hours)	
9	Nov-5	5	Disinformation and coordinated inauthentic behaviour
10	Nov-12	No tutorials	Investigating censorship, surveillance, and digital repression
11	Nov-19	6	Surveillance technologies and digital transnational repression
12	Nov-26	No tutorials	Wrap-up
Table 2. Course and tutorial schedule by week			

Participation

Tutorials (10%)

Purpose: Tutorials are for discussing the course material in small groups. Your TA will note and evaluate your participation.

Worth: 10%

Sign-up instructions: You must sign-up for tutorials on ACORN.

On [ACORN](#), search for “POL106” to see the list of tutorial sections for the course and choose one based on your availability. You can also view the list of all POL106 tutorials in the [timetable](#) by searching for “POL106.” If you wish to switch tutorial sessions, please do so on ACORN **before** the [add/drop course deadline](#). If you join the course after the add/drop deadline, you would no longer be able to use ACORN to sign up for a tutorial section – please contact directly the TA assigned to the tutorial section you would like to join.

Details:

- **There are 6 (six) tutorial sessions/weeks (See Table 2).**
- Students must sign-up for a tutorial section on ACORN.
- Tutorial participation is mandatory. All tutorial sessions are in-person.
- You must have read the required readings before weekly tutorials begin.
- During Reading Week, there will be no tutorials, no lectures, and no office hours.
- Tutorials are led and graded by TAs. Grades given by TAs for your tutorial participation are final and cannot be appealed.
- Participation grades are calculated based on attendance **and** the quality of your participation in tutorial sessions.

TA information: TA contact details will be posted on Quercus before the course begins. Each TA will create their own Discussion Board on Quercus where they may post announcements about their specific tutorial sections.

It is a student's responsibility to check Quercus regularly for updates.

Questions about specific tutorial sections or participation grades? Please contact your assigned TA directly.

Assignments

“About POL 106” Quiz on Quercus (10%)

Due date: Wednesday, October 8 at 11:59 PM.

Purpose: This multiple-choice quiz helps students understand the course policies and expectations.

Worth: 10%

Evaluation: The quiz will be graded by the Course Instructor.

Two Critical Reflection Essays on the Required Readings (30%)

Due date: Essays are due on Fridays at 11:59 PM.

Purpose: This assignment helps students thoughtfully engage with the core arguments advanced in the readings, critically reflect on the topic each week, and develop critical thinking and writing skills.

Worth: 15% per essay x 2 essays = 30% total.

Evaluation: Essays will be evaluated by the assigned TA using the assignment rubric, which is posted on Quercus.

Requirements:

- **You will prepare 2 (two) essays in 2 (two) different weeks.**
- You may write on any week **except** for Weeks 1 and 12 (the first and last weeks).
- There is no need to sign up or report your week of choice to your TA.
- **Essays are due on Fridays at 11:59 PM.**
- The essay submitted in any given week must be on that week's required readings. Essays written on past weeks/topics will **not** be accepted and will receive a grade of zero.
- Each essay must discuss and cite **all** the required readings in the chosen week.
- A minimum of **5 (five)** high-quality academic sources must be cited in the body of the essay and included in the bibliography page, **in addition** to all of the required readings for the week.
- At a minimum, the essay must highlight 1 (one) strength and 1 (one) weakness of each required reading.
- The essay must be between 1,000 and 1,200 words, double-spaced (excluding cover page and bibliography).
- You can only submit each assignment once. In other words, you cannot rewrite or resubmit an essay once it has been submitted.

- You must submit Critical Reflection Essay 1 by Week 6 (Friday, Oct. 10 at 11:59 PM) and Critical Reflection Essay 2 by Week 11 (Friday, Nov. 21 at 11:59 PM). Otherwise, a late penalty of 35% will be applied.

Details:

What is a critical reflection essay? Is it just a summary of the required readings?

No. A critical reflection essay is not just a summary of the required readings.

Your essay must clearly answer the following questions:

1. For each required reading: What is the main argument?
2. For each required reading: Which argument do you find most convincing and why?
3. For each required reading: Which argument do you think can be improved and why?

You may use “I” while writing.

You are expected to provide evidence and citations from the required readings to support your claims on the strengths and weaknesses of the authors’ arguments (i.e., you must provide the page numbers where you found these strengths and weaknesses) and explain the reasons why (i.e., why do you consider it to be a strong argument? And why do you think it is a weak argument?). Read more about [critical reading](#) for critical writing.

POL106 is an academic course and you are expected to use high-quality academic sources (e.g., published, peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters) to support your arguments. A minimum of **5 (five)** high-quality academic sources must be cited in the body of the essay and included in the bibliography page, **in addition** to all of the required readings for the week.

Minimize the use of direct quotations. Paraphrase ideas instead and use citations. [Read more](#) on how to paraphrase and summarize. When using an idea that is summarized or paraphrased, you must include an in-text citation and a corresponding bibliography entry. Consistent and accurate use of citations would help you avoid committing plagiarism in your writing. [Read more](#) on how not to plagiarize.

Formatting: Essays should be typed using 12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced with 1” (2.5 cm) margins, and submitted in PDF or Word format. Chicago Manual of Style 18th edition author-date citation should be used consistently and correctly throughout the paper. The title page must contain the following: The title of the paper, the author’s name, the author’s tutorial section and TA name, course number and name, Course Instructor’s name, and assignment due date.

Need help with writing the critical reflection essay assignment? Attend consultations (drop-in or by appointment) with trained writing instructors at U of T [Writing Centres](#), who can provide feedback on your outline or draft essay.

Questions about citations, the research process, or finding high-quality sources? Please use the "Chat with a Librarian" function on the [U of T Libraries](#) homepage.

Need help with managing or generating Chicago Style citations? Install and use [Zotero](#), a free and open source citation management tool.

Questions about the assignment or grading of the assignment? Please speak to your assigned TA. Essay assignments in the course are graded by TAs. The assignment rubric is available on Quercus. It is a student's responsibility to understand the grading rubric and [what grades mean](#) in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Exams

Mid-Term Exam (15%)

Date: Wednesday, October 15 from 11 AM to 1 PM.

Location: The Exam Centre.

Purpose: This test is to evaluate students' understanding of material covered in the first half of the course (Weeks 2 to 6).

Worth: 15%

Evaluation: The mid-term test consists of multiple choice questions and short essay questions. Exams are graded by TAs.

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Final Exam (35%)

Date: Wednesday, December 10.

Locations: TBD.

Purpose: This test is to evaluate students' understanding of the entire course content (Weeks 2 to 11).

Worth: 35%

Evaluation: The final test consists of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and essay questions. Exams are graded by TAs.

Study aids: Students should practice answering the midterm exam questions to prepare for the final exam. TAs have the answer key for the midterm exam. In Week 12 class, the Course Instructor will review the course materials from Weeks 2 to 11 to help students study for the final exam.

Course Policies

Syllabus: It is a student's responsibility to read and understand this course syllabus. Questions about the syllabus and/or the course must be directed to the Course Instructor.

Quercus: It is a student's responsibility to check the course page regularly for any announcements or information regarding the course. You must submit your assignments electronically through Quercus on time. It is a student's responsibility to ensure that submitted assignments do not contain errors and can be accessed or opened by the grader; otherwise, a late penalty will be applied.

Course materials: Course materials are provided for the exclusive use of enrolled students. These materials should **not** be reposted, shared, put in the public domain, or otherwise distributed without the explicit permission of the Course Instructor. These materials belong to your instructor, the University, and/or other sources depending on the specific facts of each situation and are protected by copyright. Students violating these policies will be subject to disciplinary actions under the [Code of Student Conduct](#).

Citation style: This course uses the [Chicago Manual of Style 18th edition](#) author-date citation style (not footnotes). Citations are needed to avoid committing plagiarism in your writing, especially as cheating and plagiarism are serious academic offenses. [Read more](#) on how to avoid plagiarism. We recommend [using Zotero](#) to manage your citations. [Learn more](#) about some important differences in writing between high school rules and university expectations.

Academic integrity: It is a student's responsibility to include accurate [citations](#) of sources and to understand what constitutes [academic integrity](#) at U of T. Please note that no outside assistance is permitted on any of the course assignments, including tools like ChatGPT and other AI writing assistants. This course policy is designed to promote your learning and intellectual development and to help you reach course learning outcomes. Read more about the use of ChatGPT on U of T's [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#).

Communication: POL106 is a large class, so please keep email messages to a minimum. You can ask questions during or after in-person lectures or tutorials or during office hours with your TA. For concerns that are personal or confidential in nature, please contact your TA or the Course Instructor directly. Please be respectful in interacting with others in the course and treat all communication with the instructor and your TA as a professional form of communication with proper grammar, sentences, and formal greetings and sign-offs.

Office hours: Office hours are drop-in hours for students to meet with their assigned TAs. Please consult your assigned TA regarding their office hours. Please make sure to read the syllabus before asking your questions.

Classroom etiquette: It is a student's responsibility to read and understand the "Classroom Etiquette" section on the Quercus page for the course and U of T's [Code of Student Conduct](#).

Absence declaration: If you are unable to attend tutorials, then you must notify your TA via email ahead of time. To support your specific medical circumstances, the documentation can be an [Absence Declaration](#) (via ACORN) or the University's [Verification of Student Illness or Injury](#) (VOI) form. If you get a concussion, break your hand, or suffer some other acute injury, you should register with [Accessibility Services](#) as soon as possible.

Accommodations: Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability or health consideration that requires accommodations, please contact Accessibility Services by email at accessibility.services@utoronto.ca or visit [Accessibility Services](#)' webpage. Please provide **a copy of the accommodation letter** to your assigned TA.

Writing feedback and support: Students are strongly encouraged to reserve an early appointment with the [Writing Centres](#) to understand and meet the writing expectations in an undergraduate course at U of T. [Read more](#) about the transition from high school to university writing.

Extensions: Extensions for assignments must be requested **before** the deadline. Assignments in other courses or late registration in the course are **not** grounds for an extension – you should plan your calendar for the semester accordingly. Supporting documentation is required **before** any extension is granted, and the appropriate documentation must be submitted within one week of the late assignment. All requests for extensions or deferrals, along with the appropriate documentation, must be submitted to your assigned TA. If you need more time or support, please [contact an academic advisor](#) at your College's Registrar's Office.

2 (two) Days 'life happens' extension: This extension must be requested **before** the deadline. Students are allowed to request an extension for 2 (two) days without explanation or documentation for the Critical Reflection Essay assignments. To use this extension, students should email their assigned TA with the subject line "Life Happens," and a 2-day extension will be automatically applied without any questions. This extension can be used once for each

essay assignment. Late penalties will be imposed after the two days have passed. If you need more time or support, please [contact an academic advisor](#) at your College's Registrar's Office.

Late penalty: Assignments handed in late without appropriate medical or other official documentation will be penalized **5% per day late (including weekends)**. These penalties can accumulate very quickly - so do not be late!

Grades: It is a student's responsibility to understand [what grades mean](#) in the Faculty of Arts & Sciences. In this course, grades are **not** arbitrarily raised or lowered. There are no extra credits available. Students earn their grades throughout the term through class participation (i.e., students earn points for meeting specific criteria in the grading rubric). In other words, this course uses the additive grading strategy. A grading rubric is provided for each assignment and posted on Quercus.

Grading: Assignments and exams are graded by TAs using the grading rubric on Quercus. TAs will also provide summative feedback on essay assignments to help students improve on subsequent assignments. Please direct all questions about grades and grading to your assigned TA. Tutorial participation is graded by TAs and their grade is final.

Grade release: We try our best to grade your assignments within two weeks of the due date; at the same time, this is a large class, so delays may occur. We appreciate your patience. Please note that Quercus automatically hides previously posted grades when new grades are entered into the system, which means that you will have to wait until the next release to see your grades again. Your assigned TA can provide you with a PDF copy of your graded assignment if you need it. Please also note that any grades posted on Quercus are for your information only, so you can view and track your progress through the course. No grades are considered official, including any posted on Quercus at any point in the term, until they have been formally approved and posted on ACORN at the end of the course. Please contact the Course Instructor as soon as possible if you think there is an error in any grade posted on Quercus.

Grade audits: As POL106 is a large course, the Course Instructor conducts an audit of grades given by TAs before they are released to students. Grading audits are conducted to ensure consistency of grading in the course and that no TA is overly harsh in their assessments. Questions regarding grade audits should be directed to the Instructor. In this course, grades are **not** arbitrarily raised or lowered.

Grade appeals: Please note that grades can either go down, go up, or remain the same due to the appeal process. Students must submit an appeal request in writing to their assigned TA for the appeal process to begin (see below regarding the appeals process). There is a **72 hour reflection period after grades are released** before appeal requests can be accepted. Appeal requests made before the reflection period ends will not receive a response and must be resent. An appeal request must be made within 48 hours after the reflection period ends. Appeal requests outside of this period will not be accepted.

Grade appeals process: The grade appeals process applies to essay assignments and exams **only**. Participation is graded by TAs and their grade is final. With regard to exams and essay assignments, subsequent to the 72 hour reflection period after grades are released, if you have good reason to believe that you were assigned an inappropriate grade in an assignment, you must, within 48 hours, submit a request in writing to meet during office hours with the TA who graded your assignment to discuss the grade. After this meeting, you must, within 48 hours, submit to the TA a written request to re-grade your work. This written request is a short essay based on the grading rubric that identifies how and why you think the grade you received does not accurately evaluate the work you submitted. Please mention the specific rubric criteria in your explanation. If, subsequent to your first appeal, you are convinced that the mark is still incorrect, you may appeal in writing to the Course Instructor within 48 hours after receiving the re-graded essay from your TA. In this written request, you must include the originally submitted work, the original comments on your work and re-grading comments from your TA, and a short paragraph explaining why your work merits a higher mark than was awarded at appeal. **The instructor's grade following this appeal process is final.**

Resources

Assistance is available to help you learn.

Have questions about finding relevant resources? [Ask a librarian.](#)

Have questions about improving your writing? [Speak to a writing instructor.](#)

Have issues with your assigned TA? Please make an appointment to speak with your assigned TA privately. If issues persist, please contact the Course Instructor.

Need academic advising or personal counseling? Speak with an academic advisor at your College's [Registrar's Office](#). Your registrar can also refer you to appropriate resources on campus if you are struggling with personal or academic issues that are affecting your school work. Please do not wait until the end of the term to get help.

POL106 is a large class and it is challenging to respond immediately to everyone's emails. Therefore, please ask your questions well in advance of due dates and before emailing, please remember to do the following:

1. **Check the syllabus and Quercus** for information about the course and assignments.
2. **Ask your questions in tutorials** with your assigned TA.
3. **Attend office hours** with your assigned TA.
4. **Ask questions after class** by speaking to the Course Instructor.

5. Email your assigned TA.

Writing Support

[Learn more](#) about some important differences in writing between high school rules and university expectations.

If you are struggling with university-level writing, you can get individual consultations with trained writing instructors at U of T's [Writing Centres](#).

You may also wish to take advantage of the [English Language Learning](#) (ELL) program, which supports all U of T undergraduates in the Faculty of Arts & Science (multilingual and native speakers) seeking to improve their English language skills.

General Advice on Writing

- Remember the assignment's purpose while you write.
- Relate your thinking and analysis to the course's broader theme ("Democracy in the Social Media Age").
- Meet with your assigned TA in advance if you have questions about the assignment.
- Review the grading rubric provided and take note of the essential components, such as citation style.
- Use an outline and start writing early, even before you are "ready" to write, as writing is a means for thinking through your thoughts or ideas.
- Present your draft essay, the assignment's instructions, and the grading rubric to a writing instructor to get feedback. Be specific on the kind of feedback you need.
- Budget time to revise or redraft the essay (i.e., put the essay aside for a few days, allowing the mind to process it so that you can see it more objectively when you return to it).
- Read the essay aloud and proofread the final copy from start to finish (including the bibliography page) before submitting.

Academic Success Centre and Peer Mentors

Numerous services and workshops are offered by the [Academic Success Centre](#).

You can also obtain one-on-one help from [peer mentors](#) and [learning strategists](#).

Health and Wellness

If you are encountering difficulties that may impact your performance in this course, please contact your [College Registrar's Office](#), which has academic advisors to help you if you need academic, financial, or personal counseling. For example, on how to be successful at school, and how to manage stress due to balancing work and school or due to adjusting to life in Canada.

To find out more about mental health resources and services and find information about emergency support, please visit the U of T [Student Life Health and Wellness](#) website.

In distress or need emotional support? Please contact [U of T Telus Health Student Support](#) at 1-844-451-9700. Outside of North America, please call 001-416-380-6578 for mental health and counselling services in 146 languages for all U of T students.

The Good2Talk Student Helpline is also available at 1-866-925-5454 for professional counselling, information and referrals helpline for mental health, addictions and students well-being. [Click here](#) for more information on mental health support.

You can also meet with a **Wellness Navigation Advisor** who can connect you with other campus and community services and support. Call the mental health clinic at 416-978-8030 ext. 5 to book an appointment or visit <https://uoft.me/mentalhealthcare> to learn about the services available to you.

Course Evaluations

Mid-term course feedback survey

In Week 5, you can provide feedback about your learning experience in the course using an [online form](#). This feedback is extremely valuable, as it will help us improve your learning experience while the course is still in session. Your feedback in this mid-term survey is **not** anonymous and will be read by the Course Instructor.

End-of-term course feedback survey

At the end of the term, you will have an opportunity to provide feedback about the course and TAs using an online evaluation form. However, **please do not wait until the end of the term** to contact the Course Instructor if you have any questions or concerns about the course.

Your feedback in a course evaluation is anonymous, but it is shared with the instructor and teaching assistants and read by others at U of T, including department chairs, faculty deans, the

provost, and the president. Course and TA evaluations are helpful for various purposes, including as part of an academic job application (e.g., for TAs to apply for course instructor/professor jobs) and to make changes and improvements to individual courses.

Comments unrelated to the course or your learning experience would diminish the value of your feedback. For example, including personal insults about the course, your instructor, or your TA in your feedback is not helpful. Instead, please provide specific and constructive suggestions regarding the course and instructional behaviors (e.g., tutorials and office hours) that would improve your learning experience.

Thank you in advance for completing the course evaluation surveys.

Weekly Course Materials

[Journal articles](#) and [newspaper articles](#) listed in the syllabus are accessible for free either on the Web or through the U of T [Libraries' website](#). Supplemental (optional) materials are posted weekly on Quercus' "Modules" page.

If you have questions about accessing the readings, please use the "Chat with a Librarian" function on the [U of T Libraries](#) homepage.

Please note that the course schedule is subject to change.

How to use the reading list:

- Required readings must be completed before class and tutorial in the week for which they are assigned.
- Recommended readings and other materials are for further investigation about a topic or to help students prepare to write the exams or assignments.

###

Week 1: Introduction to POL 106 (Sep. 3)

In this week's lecture, we will go through the course's subject matter, breakdown the assignments, and explain tutorials. We will talk about course readings, grade appeals, academic integrity, and accessibility issues. We will also discuss the resources available at U of T to help you succeed in this course.

- **Required Readings**

- The course syllabus.
- Brown University, Academic. n.d. “Evaluating Information: How to Read a Scholarly Article.” Accessed August 24, 2024.
<https://libguides.brown.edu/evaluate/Read>.
- **Recommended Readings and Other Materials**
 - CBC Massey Lecture 1: [Look at that Device in Your Hand](#)
 - Graff, G., & Birkenstein, C. (2018). *“They say / I say” : the moves that matter in academic writing* (Fourth edition.). W. W. Norton & Company.
 - “21 Pieces of Advice for First-Year Students | University of Toronto.” 2013. September 10, 2013.
<https://www.utoronto.ca/news/21-pieces-advice-first-year-students>.
 - A collection of [TED Talks \(and more\)](#) on the topic of Growth mindset.

Week 2: Politics in the social media age (Sep. 10)

- **Required Readings**
 - Farrell, Maria and Robin Berjon. 2024. “We Need To Rewild The Internet.” *Noema Magazine*, April 16.
<https://www.noemamag.com/we-need-to-rewild-the-internet>.
 - Farrell, Henry. 2012. “The Consequences of the Internet for Politics.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 15 (Volume 15, 2012): 35–52.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-030810-110815>.
- **Recommended Readings and Other Materials**
 - Gervasi, Phil. 2023. “Diving Deep into Submarine Cables: The Undersea Lifelines of Internet Connectivity.” *Kentik* (blog). March 28, 2023.
<https://www.kentik.com/blog/diving-deep-into-submarine-cables-undersea-lifelines-of-internet-connectivity/>.
 - Roser, Max, Hannah Ritchie, and Edouard Mathieu. 2023. “Technological Change.” *Our World in Data*, April 25.
<https://ourworldindata.org/technological-change>.
 - [CBC Spark Episode 482](#): The Politics of Technology

Week 3: Right to privacy (Sep. 17)

- **Required Readings**

- Moscrop, David. 2022. “Mass Surveillance Is Bad News for Privacy — and Democracy.” *Jacobin*, October 16.
<https://jacobin.com/2022/10/canada-mass-surveillance-facial-recognition-democracy-privacy>.
- Nyst, Carly, and Tomaso Falchetta. 2017. “The Right to Privacy in the Digital Age.” *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 9 (1): 104–18.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jhuman/huw026>.
- **Recommended Readings and Other Materials**
 - Tunney, Catharine. 2024. “Intelligence Chief Warns Canadians That China Can Use TikTok to Spy on Them.” *CBC News*, May 17.
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/csis-tikok-vigneault-1.7206000>.
 - Hermida, Alberto, and Víctor Hernández-Santaolalla. 2020. “Horizontal Surveillance, Mobile Communication and Social Networking Sites. The Lack of Privacy in Young People’s Daily Lives.” *Communication & Society* 33 (1): 139–52.
<https://doi.org/10.15581/003.33.36450>.
 - Trifiro, Briana M. 2023. “Breaking Your Boundaries: How TikTok Use Impacts Privacy Concerns Among Influencers.” *Mass Communication and Society* 26 (6): 1014–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2022.2149414>.

Week 4: Right to free expression (Sep. 24)

- **Required Readings**
 - Riley, Tonya. 2023. “Twitter, Now X, Will Begin Collecting Users’ Biometric Data.” *CyberScoop*, August 31. <https://cyberscoop.com/twitter-x-user-biometric-data/>.
 - Hintz, Arne. 2021. “Freedom of Expression in a Datafied World.” In *Research Handbook on Information Policy*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
<https://www.elgaronline.com/edcollchap/edcoll/9781789903577/9781789903577.00032.xml>.
- **Recommended Readings and Other Materials**
 - Isai, Vjosa. 2024. “Canada Wants to Regulate Online Content. Critics Say It Goes Too Far.” *The New York Times*, April 9, 2024, sec. World.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/09/world/canada/canada-hate-speech.html>.
 - Janda, Richard. 2021. “Protecting Democratic Expression Online: Canada’s Work in Progress.” In *Perspectives on Platform Regulation*, 365–414.
<https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748929789-365>.

- Lyon, David. 2010. "Identification, Surveillance and Democracy." In *Surveillance and Democracy*. Routledge-Cavendish.
<https://www-taylorfrancis-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203852156-9/identi%EF%AC%81cation-surveillance-democracy-david-lyon>

Week 5: Space, surveillance, and democracy (Oct. 1)

Mid-term Feedback (optional and not graded): We will spend the first 10 minutes of class collecting feedback on your learning experience to date using [this online form](#).

● Required Readings

- Lim, Gabrielle, Aidan Kerr, Marlene Terstiege, and Marc Calabretta. 2025. "A Match Made in the Heavens: The Surveillance State and the 'New Space' Economy | TechPolicy.Press." *Tech Policy Press*, June 18.
<https://techpolicy.press/a-match-made-in-the-heavens-the-surveillance-state-and-the-new-space-economy>.
- Launius, Roger D. 2014. "Space Technology and the Rise of the US Surveillance State." In *The Surveillance Imperative: Geosciences during the Cold War and Beyond*, edited by Simone Turchetti and Peder Roberts. Palgrave Macmillan US.
https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137438744_8.

● Recommended Readings and Other Materials

- Lyons, Siobhan. 2025. "Satellite Surveillance and the Orbital Unconscious." *New Media & Society* 27 (2): 914–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448231187352>.
- Paci, Tristan, and Maurice Sayinzoga. 2024. *Space, Satellites, and Democracy: Implications of the New Space Age for Democratic Processes and Recommendations for Action*. National Democratic Institute.
<https://www.ndi.org/publications/space-satellites-and-democracy-implications-new-space-age-democratic-processes-and>.
- Nardon, Laurence. 2007. "Cold War Space Policy and Observation Satellites." *Astropolitics* 5 (1): 29–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14777620701509280>.

Week 6: Information controls in the digital age (Oct. 8)

● Required Readings

- Kwet, Michael. 2024. "Brazil, Elon Musk and the Misuse of Digital Sovereignty." *Al Jazeera*, November 5.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/11/5/how-not-to-counter-the-political-sway-of-elon-musks-x>.

- Ryng, Julia, Guillemette Guicherd, Judy Al Saman, Priyanka Choudhury, and Angharad Kellett. 2022. "Internet Shutdowns: A Human Rights Issue." *The RUSI Journal* 167 (4–5): 50–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2022.2156234>.

- **Recommended Readings and Other Materials**

- Lewis, Simon, Daphne Psaledakis, and Daphne Psaledakis. 2025. "US to Ban Foreign Officials over 'flagrant Censorship' on Social Media." *Media & Telecom. Reuters*, May 28. <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/us-visa-policy-targets-foreign-nationals-who-censor-americans-state-dept-2025-05-28/>.
- Al-Zaman, Md. Sayeed, and Mridha Md. Shiblee Noman. 2024. "Rise of Digital Authoritarianism? Exploring Global Motivations Behind Governmental Social Media Censorship." *Javnost - The Public* 31 (4): 529–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2024.2396211>.
- Eichhorn, Kristin, and Eric Linhart. 2023. "Election-Related Internet-Shutdowns in Autocracies and Hybrid Regimes." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 33 (4): 705–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2022.2090950>.

Week 7: Mid-Term Exam (Oct. 15, 11 AM to 1 PM)

Location: The Exam Centre.

Week 8: Social media regulation and platform (un)accountability (Oct. 22)

- **Required Readings**

- Gkritsi, Eliza. 2025. "EU Clears Path for National Social Media Bans." *POLITICO*, July 14. <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-paves-way-to-ban-social-media-for-minors/>.
- Stockmann, Daniela. 2023. "Tech Companies and the Public Interest: The Role of the State in Governing Social Media Platforms." *Information, Communication & Society* 26 (1): 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2022.2032796>.

- **Recommended Readings and Other Materials**

- Grenier, Camille, and Yasmin Curzi de Mendonça. 2025. "Digital Imperialism: How US Social Media Firms Are Using American Law to Challenge Global Tech Regulation." *The Conversation*, March 21.

<http://theconversation.com/digital-imperialism-how-us-social-media-firms-are-using-american-law-to-challenge-global-tech-regulation-252116>.

- Bradford, Anu. 2023. "Introduction." In *Digital Empires: The Global Battle to Regulate Technology*. Oxford University Press.
https://books-scholarsportal-info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/en/read?id=/ebooks/ebooks8/oso8/2023-09-29/1/oso_9780197649268#page=27.
- Rochefort, Alex. 2020. "Regulating Social Media Platforms: A Comparative Policy Analysis." *Communication Law and Policy* 25 (2): 225–60.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10811680.2020.1735194>.

Week 9: Disinformation and coordinated inauthentic behaviour (Nov. 5)

● Required Readings

- Tapsell, Ross. 2024. "It's Time to Reframe Disinformation: Indonesia's Elections Show Why." *Centre for International Governance Innovation*, March 7.
<https://www.cigionline.org/articles/its-time-to-reframe-disinformation-indonesias-elections-show-why/>.
- Maweu, Jacinta Mwendu. 2019. "'Fake Elections'? Cyber Propaganda, Disinformation and the 2017 General Elections in Kenya." *African Journalism Studies* 40 (4): 62–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2020.1719858>.

● Recommended Readings and Other Materials

- A, Shoeb. 2024. "Bangladesh: Meta Accuses Ruling Party and Think Tank of Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior." *Global Voices Advox*, July 11.
<https://advox.globalvoices.org/2024/07/11/bangladesh-meta-accuses-ruling-party-and-think-tank-of-coordinated-inauthentic-behavior/>.
- Hunter, Lance Y. 2023. "Social Media, Disinformation, and Democracy: How Different Types of Social Media Usage Affect Democracy Cross-Nationally." *Democratization* 30 (6): 1040–72.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2023.2208355>.
- Freelon, Deen, and Chris Wells. 2020. "Disinformation as Political Communication." *Political Communication* 37 (2): 145–56.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2020.1723755>.

Week 10: Investigating censorship, surveillance, and digital repression (Nov. 12)

End-of-term Course Evaluation: Please fill out the evaluation form regarding your learning experience in the course. Thank you for your time and thoughtful comments.

- **Required Readings**

- Deibert, Ronald. 2023. "The Autocrat in Your iPhone: How Mercenary Spyware Threatens Democracy." *Foreign Affairs* 102 (1).
https://go-gale-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/ps/i.do?p=CIC&u=utoronto_main&id=GALE%7CA750691750&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon&aty=ip.
- Dobson, Nathan, and Nicole Stremmlau. 2024. "Accessible Censorship." In *Handbook of Media and Communication Governance*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
<https://www.elgaronline.com/edcollchap/book/9781800887206/book-part-9781800887206-50.xml>.

- **Recommended Readings and Other Materials**

- Busch, Andreas, Patrick Theiner, and Yana Breindl. 2018. "Internet Censorship in Liberal Democracies: Learning from Autocracies?" In *Managing Democracy in the Digital Age: Internet Regulation, Social Media Use, and Online Civic Engagement*, edited by Julia Schwanholz, Todd Graham, and Peter-Tobias Stoll, 11–28. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-61708-4_2.
- Ververis, Vasilis, Sophia Marguel, and Benjamin Fabian. 2020. "Cross-Country Comparison of Internet Censorship: A Literature Review." *Policy & Internet* 12 (4): 450–73. <https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.228>.
- Stoycheff, Elizabeth, G. Scott Burgess, and Maria Clara Martucci. 2020. "Online Censorship and Digital Surveillance: The Relationship between Suppression Technologies and Democratization across Countries." *Information, Communication & Society* 23 (4): 474–90.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1518472>.

Week 11: Surveillance technologies and digital transnational repression
(Nov. 19)

- **Required Readings**

- Gorokhovskaia, Yana, and Grady Vaughan. 2025. "Engaging the Community: Combating Transnational Repression in Canada." Freedom House.
<https://freedomhouse.org/report/transnational-repression/canada/2025>.

- Anstis, Siena, and Émilie LaFlèche. 2025. "Gender-Based Digital Transnational Repression as a Global Authoritarian Practice." *Globalizations* 22 (4): 671–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2024.2401706>.

Recommended Readings and Other Materials

- Anstis, Siena, Noura Al-Jizawi, and Ronald J. Deibert. 2022. "Transnational Repression and the Different Faces of Sovereignty Sovereign Identity Crisis: State, Self, and Collective in a Digital Age Event: Essays." *Temple Law Review* 95 (4): 641–60. <https://heinonline-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/temple95&id=653&collection=journals&index=journals/temple>.
- Bakir, Vian. 2021. "Freedom or Security? Mass Surveillance of Citizens." In *Handbook of Global Media Ethics*, edited by Stephen J. A. Ward. Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32103-5_47.
- Tsourapas, Gerasimos. 2021. "Global Autocracies: Strategies of Transnational Repression, Legitimation, and Co-Optation in World Politics." *International Studies Review* 23 (3): 616–44. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viaa061>.

Week 12: Wrap-up (Nov. 26)

● **Required Readings**

- Maati, Ahmed, Mirjam Edel, Koray Saglam, Oliver Schlumberger, and Chonlawit Sirikupt. 2024. "Information, Doubt, and Democracy: How Digitization Spurs Democratic Decay." *Democratization* 31 (5): 922–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2023.2234831>.

● **Recommended Readings and Other Materials**

- Dror-Shpoliansky, Dafna, and Yuval Shany. 2021. "It's the End of the (Offline) World as We Know It: From Human Rights to Digital Human Rights – A Proposed Typology." *European Journal of International Law* 32 (4): 1249–82. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ejil/chab087>.
- Kuehn, Kathleen M., and Leon A. Salter. 2020. "Assessing Digital Threats to Democracy, and Workable Solutions: A Review of the Recent Literature." *International Journal of Communication* 14 (0): 22. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/12959>.