Communication 230 A, B, C: Seminar on Digital Civil Society

SYLLABUS

Fall 2019, Comm 230A
Digital Civil Society: Making Money and Making Trouble on the 1990s Internet

Units: 3
Grading basis: Ltr or Cr/NC
Meeting pattern: Wednesday, 1:30-3:20p
Room: TBD
Instructors: Lucy Bernholz, Toussaint Nothias, Argyri Panezi, Jonathan Pace, Cadence Willse

In a short three decades we've seen the hope for digital networks shift from liberating and democratizing to an anxious age of surveillance capitalism. How did this happen, what's being done about it, and what does it mean for democratic governance and collective action in the future? The class examines the ways in which digital technology shapes how we communicate, organize, advocate, and engage with each other in markets, politics, and civil society. We will focus on the ways digital networks and technologies have changed how people come together to make change in the world, a sphere of action commonly called the social sector.

This is a year-long course, designed and offered as three independent quarters. Fall quarter focuses on the 1990s — the popular adoption of the internet in the northern hemisphere, the development of international digital networks, the creation of anchor digital civil society organizations (such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation and the Internet Archive), the emergence of the digital economy and the dot com bubble, global shifts in journalism coverage, key technology legislation and legal battles over free expression. Winter quarter shifts to the 2000s — the emergence of social media platforms, the rise of mobile connectivity, institutional shifts in journalism, and major developments in intellectual property, state surveillance, and digital activism. In Spring Quarter we focus on the 2010s and the future, from the Arab Spring and global political propaganda to electronic governments and biotechnologies. Across all three quarters, we will analyze the opportunities and the challenges to associational life, free expression, individual privacy, and collective action. We will examine the technological, organizational, legal, economic, and social shifts that have accompanied our growing global dependence on digital networks. The class draws from law, media studies, political science, and history, bringing in research perspectives from Europe, the U.S, and African scholarship.

Each quarter includes a "demo day" of student presentations, open to the campus public, in which we will be highlighting projects that examine the key themes of the course from different disciplines. Students will write one final paper or produce one project per quarter, based in their own disciplinary methods or integrated with others in a group project. Students are also responsible for leading at least one class session per quarter.

Objectives: After completing the course, students should be able to:

- Critique common assumptions about internet history: that the internet is an inherently open network, that it increases civic and political participation, and that it has always been a Silicon Valley success story.
- Understand the different interests and stakeholders that participated in the development of the internet and other digital technologies as they shaped commerce and civil society, during the critical decade of the 1990s.
- Understand the impact of national and international laws and treaties on both the marketplace that shapes digital networks, software and hardware and on the nature and possibilities of associational life and political and civic activism.
- Understand and critique different approaches to these issues taken by historians, media scholars, legal scholars, journalists, and political scientists.
- Understand the interactions between digital technology, markets, politics, and civil society.
- Articulate the historical impact of anchor digital civil society organizations.
- Define the different constraints posed on civil society by law and policy, technological designs, and social norms.
- Formulate historically informed arguments on whether there are normative constraints we should put on digital technologies to strengthen civil society and how can we overcome them.
- Lead classmates in discussions of existing research in relationship to developments in digital civil society.
- Draft original writing on digital civil society topics and incorporate peer-review feedback.
- Critique work presented by peers with an eye to strengthening the quality of the scholarship.
- Apply theoretical concepts to practical applications, workshop and present ideas relevant to the application of the class themes to the real world.

Meeting schedule and grading: This is a 3 unit class, including one weekly seminar of 2 hours and a mandatory public speaker series that includes student presentations and leadership (Digital Civil Society +1 Series). The course can be taken for letter grades or credit/no credit.

Assignments:
Students are required to write one term paper or produce one quarter-long project. The papers, due at the end of the term, will be 10-15 pages long (double-spaced). The requirements for the projects will be discussed with the faculty team and the assigned faculty advisor(s).

Each student will also lead one class session centered around the presentation of a one-page synthesis and provocation on the assigned readings. All enrolled students will participate in the weekly Digital Civil Society Speaker Series.

Week 1: Introduction to Digital Civil Society
This class introduces the key themes and assignments of the class. We begin with students' own experiences in digital civil society, drawing from their use of digital tools for organizing, communicating, and securing information. We will introduce the numerous disciplinary approaches that inform the class, provide an overview of civil society as discussed in both

Western democratic and post-colonial theories. Students will be assigned to the specific readings they will be responsible for presenting during the term and the +1 series will be introduced.

Week 2: Activism on, and about, "cyberspace"
This week focuses on the creation of institutions designed specifically to manage - or address the broad social issues catalyzed by - the growing availability of and dependence on digital networks. We begin with the creation of free and open source software foundations and discuss the creation of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, Internet Archive, Mozilla, Creative Commons, and Wikipedia. We also examine the rise of new philanthropic actors, especially those founded on technology-generated wealth, and the earliest experiments in using digital technology for both political and charitable fund development and mobilization. Readings include:

Bernholz, L. (2019). EFF and the invention of digital civil society. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.

Stallman, R. (2002) *Free Software, Free Society.* Published online.

Karpf, D. (2016). *Analytic activism: Digital listening and the new political strategy*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Read excerpts.

Suggested Reading:
Dubow, T., Devaux, A. & Manville, C. (2017). Civic engagement: How can digital technology encourage greater engagement in civil society? Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. Available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE253.html.
Levine, P. (2007). Collective action, civic engagement, and the knowledge commons. *Understanding knowledge as a commons*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Week 3
International Networks, World Wide Web, and Women in Computing
There are many kinds of digital networks and many kinds of hypertext systems. In this section, we'll consider why the World Wide Web and HTTP won out among the variety of alternatives. We'll also look at the role of women in computing, including the role of women in developing hypertext systems. Along the way, we'll learn key terms that will help us understand the technical maturation of the internet.

Evans, C. (2018). *Broad Band: The Untold Story of Women in Computing.* New York, NY: Penguin. Read "Hypertext".

Peters, B. (2016). *How Not to Network a Nation: The Uneasy History of the Soviet Internet.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Read "A Global History of Cybernetics".

Kinkoph, S. (1994). *Computers: A Visual Encyclopedia.* New York, NY: Alpha Books. Read "Database", "GUI", "Internet", "Network", and "Operating Systems".

Week 4

LA Riots and Racialized State Surveillance
Communities of color are consistently targeted by state surveillance systems. In this section, we'll look at the 1992 LA riots as emblematic of this trend, and we'll consider the intersection of race, state power, and digital technology at this pivotal moment in American history. Our readings will take us through the visual dimension of race, the events leading up to and surrounding the riots, and the legacy of the riots today.

Butler, J. (1993). Endangered/endangering: Schematic racism and white paranoia. In Gooding-Williams, R. (Ed.), *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprisings* (pp. 15-22). New York, NY: Routledge.

Browne, S. (2015). *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Read "Introduction, and Other Dark Matters".

Hattery, A. & Smith, E. (2017). *Policing Black Bodies.* New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield. Read "Urban Riots and Protest; or, a Logical Response to Policing Black Bodies".

Week 5. 1994 - A Global Year in News
News media are important institutions in democratic societies. They inform citizens, hold governments accountable and provide a plurality of voices in public debate. They also constitute a complex and diverse set of organizational entities found across civil society, state and market spheres. In this session, we look at the global evolution of journalism in the 1990s through the lens of key pivotal news event that shaped the year 1994, including the first interracial elections in South Africa, the genocide in Rwanda and the OJ Simpson trial. The trends highlighted include the growth of the 24-hours news cycle, entertainment and celebrity driven news (tabloidification), media commercialization, and humanitarian reporting. The session discusses how these trends are entangled with technological changes in journalism production, most notably the evolution from analog to digital satellite signals.

Cushion, S. (2010). Three phases of 24-hour news television. In Cushion, S. & Lewis, J. (Eds.), *The Rise of 24-hour news television. Global perspectives* (pp.15-31). Oxford, UK: Peter Lang.

Kamp, D. The Tabloid Decade. *Vanity Fair* (Feb 7, 1999). Available at https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/1999/02/david-kamp-tabloid-decade

Chaon, A. (2007). Chapter 13: Who failed in Rwanda, journalists or the media? In Thompson, A. (Ed.), *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*. London: Pluto Press.

Paterson. C. (1994). Who owns images of Africa? *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, 22(1): 15-18. Available at https://www.jstor.org/stable/1166402?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

Nyamnjoh, F. (2005). Professionalism and ethics in the private press in Cameroon. In *Africa's Media, Democracy and the Politics of Belonging*. London: Zed Books.

Week 6. 1995 — Netscape IPO and the dot-com bubble

Netscape went public in August 1995 and was valued at almost $ 3 billion. Yahoo! followed in 1996. At the peak of the dot-com bubble, Yahoo! hits its highest valuation at $125 billion. What happened then and what are the lessons for the future? Are we constantly in fear of a second dot-com bubble to come? What are the links to the US Patriot Act that follows in the early 2000s?

Wired Staff. (August 2005). What were they thinking? A decade of genius and madness, *Wired Magazine.*

Goldfarb, B. & Kirsch D. (2019), *Bubbles and crashes, the boom and the bust of technological innovation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Read excerpts.

Reingold, J. (March 1, 2004). What we learned in the new economy. *Fast Company.* Available at: https://www.fastcompany.com/48557/what-we-learned-new-economy-2.

United States Department of Justice. (Undated). Highlights of the USA Patriot Act. Available at: https://www.justice.gov/archive/ll/highlights.htm
    (The Act is available here: https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-107publ56/pdf/PLAW-107publ56.pdf)

Week 7. New Rules, New Actors, New Activism
Many key laws and regulations - on speech, encryption, copyright, and liability - that will shape the internet, the web, and citizens' experiences for decades are set in this 1990. Civil society actors play key roles - some more successful than others - in these policy battles. We'll look at both the activism that shaped the regulations and what the resulting rules have meant for civic and political life.

Postigo, H. (2012). *The Digital Rights Movement*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Read excerpts on DMCA and copyright.

Bernstein v. Department of Justice, 922 F. Supp. 1426 (N.D. Cal. 1996).

Levy, S. (2001). *Crypto: How The Code Rebels Beat the Government.* New York, NY: Penguin Press.

Kossof, J. (2019). *The Twenty Six Words that Created the Internet*. Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press.

Week 8. ICANN and Digital Maintenance Organizations
On a technical level, the internet is carefully governed through digital maintenance organization. This week, we'll look at ICANN and other groups that establish important internet protocols. Our readings will take us through the formation of these organizations, their significance as civil society collectives, and the opportunities and threats that attend technical internet governance.

Yates, J. & Murphy, C. (2019). *Engineering Rules: Global Standard Setting Since 1880.* Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press. Read "Computer Networking Ushers In a New Era in Standard Setting".

Mueller, M. (2002). *Ruling the Root: Internet Governance and the Taming of Cyberspace.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Read "The Internet Name and Address Spaces".

Galloway, A. (2004). *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Read "Institutionalization".

Week 9. 1999 — The Microsoft antitrust trial
The end of the decade is marked by the first big antitrust case against Microsoft. The tradeoffs between innovation and monopoly (or 'bigness') is at the heart of the debates around this landmark antitrust law case. Ever since, the US and, later, the EU antitrust (or competition) enforcers and courts, have been raiding big tech in an effort to deal with the effects of abusive business practices and monopolization.

Wired Staff. (November 2000). The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. *Wired Magazine.*

Wu, T. (2018). *The curse of bigness: Antitrust in the new gilded age*. New York, NY: Random House. Read excerpts.

Lyall, S. (May 5, 2018). Who strikes fear into Silicon Valley? Margrethe Vestager, Europe's antitrust enforcer. *The New York Times*. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/05/world/europe/margrethe-vestager-silicon-valley-data-privacy.html

Suggested Reading:
United States v. Microsoft Corporation, 253 F.3d 34 (D.C. Cir. 2001).
Economides, N., & Lianos, I. (2010). A critical appraisal of remedies in the EU microsoft cases. *Colum. Bus. L. Rev.*, 346.

Week 10. Presentations
Students final presentations of papers and projects.