

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

From Facebook to Pegasus: Technology as a tool of oppression a global view - 58696

Last update 30-10-2024

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 2nd degree (Master)

Responsible Department: International Relations

Academic year: 0

Semester: 1st Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Tamar Megiddo

Coordinator Email: tamar.megiddo@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: Monday, 1pm

Teaching Staff:

Dr. Tamar Megiddo

Course/Module description:

Technology can be used to strengthen the connection between citizens and their political representatives, to improve the efficiency of government services, and to enhance law enforcement or the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it can also be used to exacerbate social polarization, spread disinformation, and collect information about citizens' private lives. The development and use of technology can promote a commitment to the rule of law and democratic values or undermine them. In this course, we will explore the dark side of technology and examine the various ways in which it is used as a tool of oppression around the world.

The course is divided into two parts. In the first part, we will introduce the basic concepts of the course: technology, democracy, and the rule of law, and we will explore the interface between them, with reference also to the populism that characterizes the current global political climate. In this context, we will review the many ways in which technology can promote and ensure the rule of law and democracy, including in relation to citizen empowerment, citizen oversight of government; transparency; direct democracy; online government and more. In the second part of the course, we will examine the various ways in which technology is used as a tool of oppression. This discussion will be conducted around a number of themes: truth and information; expertise and experts; social trust; surveillance capitalism; the role of the media; elections; activism and political oppression, and technology as a weapon.

The lessons will be held in a discussion format, and students will submit assignments and write a comprehensive final paper on topics related to the course themes, after approval of the chosen topic with the lecturer.

Course/Module aims:

The course is designed to help students develop a critical perspective on technology and its implications for the rule of law and democracy. In addition to familiarizing students with theoretical approaches, the course will examine case studies from around the world that illustrate the advantages and challenges that technology poses for citizens in modern states in general and democracies in particular.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

At the end of this course, students will be able to evaluate critically the impact of technological advancements on democracy and the rule of law around the world.

Attendance requirements(%):

100

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Seminar

Course/Module Content:

1. Introduction, Technology
2. Rule of law; Democracy
3. Technology at the service of activism
4. Populism and democratic decline
5. Introduction to machine learning and artificial intelligence
6. Truth and information, expertise
7. Social trust
8. Capitalist surveillance
9. The role of the media
10. Elections
11. Political oppression
12. Technology as a weapon

Required Reading:

Topic 1: Introduction

• Required reading:

o E.M. Forster, *The Machine Stops* (Hebrew Translation 2017), pp. 23-9, 68-61.

• Recommended viewing:

o Video: *The Machine Stops* (2011)

Topic 2: Technology

• Required readings:

o Langdon Winner, "Do Artifacts have Politics?" *Dedalus*, vol. 109 No. 1 (Winter 1980), pp. 121-136

o Lawrence Lessig, *Code 2.0* (2nd ed. 2006), pp. 1-9

• Recommended readings:

o Robert Nye, "Can We Define Technology?", in *Technology Matters: Questions to Live With* (2006), pp. 1-16.

o Robert J. Whelchel, "Is Technology Neutral?" *IEEE Technology and Society Magazine*, Vol. 5 (1986), pp, 3-8.

Topic 3: The Rule of Law

• Required readings:

o Aharon Barak, "The Rule of Law and the Supremacy of the Constitution", *Mishpat VeMimshal* 5 (1999), pp. 399-375. (Hebrew)

• Recommended readings:

o Lon Fuller, *The Morality of Law* (Rev. ed. 1969), pp. 33-44

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- o Nadiv Mordechai, Mordechai Kremnitzer, and Amir Fuchs, *A Guide for Legislators* (2015), pp. 47-82 (Hebrew).
 - o Natalie Davidson, "The Coronavirus Law, the Rule of Law, and the Puppet Show: "Emergency within an Emergency": Symposium on the Coronavirus Law, the Rule of Law, and Human Rights, ICON-S-IL Blog (10.1.21). (Hebrew)
- Topic 4: Democracy
- Required readings:
 - o Doron Dorfman, *Democracy as Self-Government* (2016), pp. 35-42 (Hebrew)
 - o Robert Dahl, "What is Democracy?", *On Democracy* (Hebrew translation, 2002), pp. 39-47
 - o Philip Pettit, *On the People's Terms* (2012), pp. 1-8
 - Recommended readings:
 - o Tehila Schwartz Altshuler, *Government Open Policy in Israel in the Digital Age* (2012), pp. 25-42. (Hebrew)
 - o Videos: *100 Days of Transparency, and Where are the Members of Knesset?* (Hebrew)
 - o Public Complaints Commissioner, *Annual Report No. 43* (2017), pp. 39-42. (Hebrew)
 - o Yossi Dahan, *On the Wealth of Networks - Yochai Benkler on the Internet, Freedom, Justice, Democracy and Culture, The Sting* (2006) (Hebrew)
 - o Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*, pp. 1-18
- Topic 5: Populism
- Required readings:
 - o Kim Lane Scheppele, *Autocratic Legalism* (Hebrew translation 2023), pp. 11-20
 - o Jan-Werner Müller, *What is Populism* (2016), pp. 1-6, 44-49
 - o Noam Gidron, "Populism as a Problem of Social Cohesion" ICON-S-IL Blog (3.10.2021) (Hebrew).
 - Recommended readings:
 - o Kim Lane Scheppele, *Autocratic Legalism* (Hebrew translation 2023)
- Topic 6: Truth and Information
- Required readings and viewing:
 - o Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas* (2017), pp. 223-251
 - o Video: Ben Nimmo, *The 4d Model of Disinformation Campaigns*
- Topic 7: Expertise
- Required readings and viewing:
 - o Naomi Oreskes & Eric Conway, "Defeating the Merchants of Doubt", *Nature* 465: 686-687 (2010)
 - o Tom Nichols, *The Death of Expertise* (2017), pp. 1-12
 - Recommended readings:
 - o World Health Organization, *Managing the Covid-19 Infodemic: Call for Action*
 - o Harry G. Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* (Princeton University Press, 2005)
 - o Naomi Oreskes & Eric M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*, (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011)
- Topic 8: Social Trust
- Required readings and viewing:
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- o Mark E. Warren, "Trust and Democracy", in *The Oxford Handbook of Social and Political Trust* (Eric M. Uslaner, ed. 2018), at pp. 75-79.
 - o Video: Zeynep Tufekci, *We're Building a Dystopia Just to Make People Click on Ads* (2018)

Topic 9: Capitalist Surveillance

- Required readings and viewing:
 - o Shoshana Zuboff, *Surveillance Capitalism* (2021)
 - o Michael Birnhak and Niva Elkin-Koren, "The Invisible Handshake", 8 *Virginia Journal of Law and Tech* 1 (2003), paras. 1-9
- Recommended reading and viewing:
 - o Video: Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (2018)
 - o Kate Crawford, *Atlas of AI* (2021)

Topic 10: The Role of the Media

- Required reading:
 - o Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks* (2006), pp. 212-219, 266-272
- Recommended readings:
 - o Safiya Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression* (2018), pp. 14-26
 - o Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks* (2006), 176-211

Topic 11: Elections

- Required reading:
 - o Ron Shamir and Eli Bachar, *Cyber Attacks on the Electoral System - How to Deal with Them?* (2019), pp. 18-37 (Hebrew)
- Recommended listening and viewing:
 - o Michael Schmitt, *Foreign Cyber Interference in Elections: An International Law Primer*, *EJIL TALK!* (2020) – Part I, Part II, Part III
 - o Video: Inbal Orpaz and Tomer Shemi, "The Voice of Truth": Fake News on the Way to the Ballot Box (11.3.21) [also available as an episode of the podcast "Podcasteratgi" on various platforms].

Topic 12: Activism and Political Repression

- Required reading:
 - o Tamar Megiddo, "Online Activism, Digital Domination and the Rule of Trolls", *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*, vol. 59 (2020), pp. 395-425
 - o Mickey Zar, *The Politics of Privacy* (2022), pp. 11-25 (Hebrew)
- Recommended readings:
 - o Katy E. Pearce, "Democratizing kompromat: the affordances of social media for state-sponsored harassment", *Information, Communication & Society* (2015) 18:10, 1158-1174
 - o Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas* (2017), pp. ix-xx
 - o Zeynep Tufekci, *How the Internet has Made Social Change Easy to Organize, Hard to Win* (2015)
 - o State Comptroller, *Special Interim Report on the State of Israel's Response to the Corona Crisis: Use of Technological Capabilities of the General Security Service to Assist the Ministry of Health in Conducting Epidemiological Investigations in the Fight against Corona* 123-91 (2020) (Hebrew)

Topic 13: Technology as a Weapon

- Required reading and viewing:

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- o Rob Deibert, "Cyberspace Under Siege", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol 26:3 (2015), pp. 64-78
 - o Amnesty International, *The Social Atrocity* (Sept 29, 2022), pp. 6-11, 38-49
 - o Pegasus: the spyware technology that threatens democracy, *The Guardian* (July 19, 2021)
 - Recommended listening and reading:
 - o *The Guardian*, *The Pegasus project: hacked in London* (2021) (podcast)
 - o Hagar Sheizaf and Yonatan Yaakobzon, *The Israeli Spy Industry is Helping Dictators Around the World Persecute Gays and Regime Opponents*, *Haaretz* (October 19, 2018) (Hebrew)
 - o Tehila Schwartz Altshuler, Amir Cohen, and Rachel Arridor HersHKovitz, *A Platform for Discussion in the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Following the "Pegasus" Affair* (Israel Democracy Institute, 26.7.21) (Hebrew)
 - o Idan Ring, *Following Haugen: Need: Israeli Heroes*, *The Seventh Eye* (October 13, 2021) (Hebrew)
 - o Yuval Shani and Danny Efroni, *Thinking Outside the Box: First Lessons from the #WannaCry Attack*, *Security Classification Blog* (May 17, 2017)
 - o Nicole Perlroth, *This is How They Tell me the World Ends* (2021)
 - o Ron Deibert, *Reset* (2020)

Additional Reading Material:

See under required reading, marked as

Grading Scheme:

Submission assignments during the semester: Exercises / Essays / Audits / Reports / Forum / Simulation / others 90 %

Attendance / Participation in Field Excursion 10 %

Additional information:

The lessons rely heavily on the texts assigned as required reading for each week. Therefore, the discussion will be held under the assumption that all participants have read the texts and given them thought in light of the guiding questions that will be published in the Moodle. During the lesson, we will address these questions. The texts can be found through the library's catalogue or in the Moodle. There may be changes to the reading list during the semester, so please follow the announcements in the lessons and in the Moodle.