

Pol 2240/481
The Geopolitics of Information and Communication Technologies
Tuesday 2-4 pm
Location: SS 2129

Contact Information:

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Overview

New information and communication technologies, such as the Internet, are widely believed to be transforming world politics. While these transformations have brought about important challenges to state power and authority, they have not eliminated power politics and the quest for security and competitive advantage among actors on the world stage. Today, states and non-state actors alike are seeking ways to exploit information and information systems to pursue political objectives. The control of information has long been widely seen as a source of political power, and is manifest today in competition over both the media and the messages of the global communications environment. From the filtering and interception of Internet traffic to the circulation of home-made videos by militant Islamists, a new geopolitics of information and communication technologies is underway.

The Geopolitics of ICTs course is an intensive examination of the ways in which states and non-state actors are contesting the newly evolving terrain of global digital-electronic-telecommunications. Topics covered include Internet censorship and surveillance, information warfare, computer network attacks, hacktivism, and governance of global communications. The course is organized as a series of intensive modules. One feature of the class will be a "hands-on" analysis of censorship circumvention and network interrogation techniques at the Citizen Lab (<http://www.citizenlab.org/>).

Assignments

There will be two written, related assignments for Pol 2240/481. The assignments are focused on a detailed investigation of a case study you choose from a list provided at the beginning of term. The first will be a detailed chronology and annotated bibliography of the case, worth 30% of your final grade. It is due on the last week of class in the first term. The chronology and annotated bibliography will be made up of data and sources that inform the research for the second assignment. The second assignment is a major research paper worth 50% of the final grade, and it is due the last week of class.

Grading

Summary:

- 1) First term written assignment (30%): December 1 2009
- 2) Second term written assignment (50%): April 1 2010
- 3) Participation and presentations (20%)

Late Penalty: 1% per day off of the assignment for each day late (weekdays)

Class Participation

As the course is organized as a seminar, class participation is vital and worth 20% of the mark. Each week that we meet, you will be expected to come to class having read the required material and prepared to discuss it critically. For each seminar, you will prepare a one page bullet-point summary of the main points you have derived from the readings as well as any critical commentaries you wish to make. These bullet-point summaries plus your class comments will form the basis of your participation mark.

Lecture Schedule and Readings

There are no required texts to purchase for this course. All of the required readings are found online at <http://pol2240.civiblog.org/>

It is essential that all students enrolled in the course familiarize themselves with the website and visit it continuously throughout the term. Although the basic parameters of the course have been set, including lecture topics, course text, and assignments, the required and recommended weekly readings may change as current events dictate. The first time you visit the site, please register as a user, make sure to click on to receive email notifications of announcements and changes to the website, and spend some time exploring its features.

Office Hours

By appointment only