

**POL106H1F 2024**  
**Contemporary Challenges to Democracy: Democracy in the Social Media Age**  
**Department of Political Science, University of Toronto**

**Weekly in-person lecture:** Wednesdays, 9:10 to 11:00 AM  
**Course instructor:** Irene Poetranto

## Course Description



The Internet and social media are the predominant means by which most of the world communicates, seeks, and receives information today. The character of the Internet and social media and how these communication technologies are regulated can influence 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 and social media. We will explore the underlying business model of social media, widely known as “surveillance capitalism,” and discuss how this business model distorts democratic processes and infringes on civil liberties. We will study the threats that disinformation and other information manipulation and control pose to democracy, and examine the often-overlooked ecological impacts of the Internet and social media. Students are expected to attend the weekly lecture and complete all required readings before lectures begin. Tutorial participation is mandatory. Assignments and tutorials are designed to help students learn the subject matter, develop critical thinking skills, and improve verbal and written communication skills.

## In-person Tutorials (mandatory)

**Participation in tutorials are mandatory and worth 15% of the total grade. 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.

## POL106: A Writing-Integrated Teaching (WIT) Course

POL106 participates in 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 tutorial activities 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.

### About Course Materials

[Journal articles](#) and [newspaper articles](#) listed in the syllabus are accessible for free either on the Web or through the UofT [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 [UofT Libraries](#) homepage.

### Course Requirements

<b>Participation:</b> Eight weekly tutorial sessions	Tutorials are mandatory.	15%
<b>Quiz:</b> About POL106 Quiz	Due on Oct. 16 at 11:59 PM.	10%
<b>Essay Assignments:</b> Three critical reflection essays on the required readings.	Due on Fridays of your chosen week at 11:59 PM. See requirements below.	75%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

Table 1. Course requirements for POL106

**All assignments must be submitted on Quercus.** In case of technical difficulties, you can submit your assignment via email to your assigned TA **before** the deadline. Assignments must be submitted before the deadline, do not contain errors, and can be opened or downloaded by the grader; otherwise, the late penalty will be applied.

### Course topic and tutorial schedule by week

Class Week #	Date	Tutorial Week #	Class topic	Notes
1	4-Sep	1	Introduction to POL106	
2	11-Sep	2	What is the Internet? What is social media?	
3	18-Sep	<b>No tutorials</b>	Privacy rights and democracy	<b>Office hours only</b>

4	25-Sep		3	Freedom of expression and democracy	
5	2-Oct		4	Consent, privacy, and digital identity	
6	9-Oct	<b>No tutorials</b>		Big Tech, 'Big Brother,' and surveillance capitalism	<b>Office hours only</b>
7	16-Oct		5	Social media regulation and content moderation	
8	23-Oct		6	Transnational activism and digital repression	
<b>No class</b>	30-Oct	<b>Reading Week - No tutorials, no office hours</b>			
9	6-Nov		7	Disinformation, elections, and democracy	
10	13-Nov	<b>No tutorials</b>		Internet censorship and shutdowns	<b>Office hours only</b>
11	20-Nov		8	Ecological impact of the Internet and social media	
12	27-Nov	<b>No tutorials</b>		What to do?	<b>Office hours only</b>
Table 2. Course and tutorial schedule by week					

## Participation

### Tutorials (15%)

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

**Worth:** 15%

**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 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](#).

### **Details:**

- There are 8 (eight) tutorial sessions/weeks (See Table 2).
- Tutorial participation is mandatory. All tutorial sessions are in-person.
- During Reading Week, there will be no tutorials, no lecture, and no office hours.

- Tutorials are led and graded by TAs. Participation grades are calculated based on attendance **and** the quality of your participation in tutorial sessions.
- You must have read the required readings before weekly tutorials begin.

**TA information:** TA contact details will be posted on Quercus in September 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?** If you have questions about specific tutorial sections or participation grades, please get in touch with the assigned TA directly.

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## Assignments

“About POL106” Quiz on Quercus (10%)

**Due date:** Wednesday, October 16 at 11:59 PM.

**Purpose:** This quiz aims to help students understand the course policies and expectations.

**Worth:** 10%

**Evaluation:** The quiz will be graded by the course instructor.

Three Critical Reflection Essays (75%)

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

**Purpose:** This assignment aims to help 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:** 25% per essay x 3 essays = 75% total.

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

**Requirements:**

- You will prepare 3 (three) essays in 3 (three) different weeks.
- You may write on any week **except** for Weeks 1 and 12 (the first and last weeks).
- The essay must be between 1,000 and 1,200 words, double-spaced (excluding cover page and bibliography).
- 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 receive a grade of zero.
- There is no need to sign up or report your week of choice to your TA.
- You can only submit each assignment once. In other words, you cannot rewrite or resubmit an essay once it has been submitted.
- Each essay must discuss and cite **all** the required readings in the chosen week.
- At a minimum, the essay must highlight 1 (one) strength and 1 (one) weakness of each required reading.
- You must submit Critical Reflection Essay 1 **and** Essay 2 by Week 7 (Friday, 11:59 PM). Otherwise, a 35% late penalty will be applied.
- You must submit Critical Reflection Essay 3 by Week 11 (Friday, 11:59 PM). Otherwise, a late penalty 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. What is the main argument of each required reading?
2. For each reading: Which argument do you find most convincing and why?
3. For each reading: Which argument do you think can be improved and why?

You are expected to provide evidence and citations from the required readings to support your claims on strengths and weaknesses (i.e., the page numbers where you found these strengths and weaknesses) and explain the reasons why (i.e., why is it a strength? And why is it a weakness?). Read more about [critical reading](#) for critical writing.

You may use "I" while writing. 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.

POL106 is an academic course. Therefore, 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 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.

**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 17th 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, instructor’s name, and assignment due date.

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

**Questions about research or finding high-quality sources?** Please use the "Chat with a Librarian" function on the [UofT 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.

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## Course Policies

**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.

**Communication:** Please ask your questions during 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. POL106 is a large class, so please keep email messages to a minimum. 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 UofT'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. Regarding documentation in support of your specific medical circumstances, this 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](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca) or visit [Accessibility Services](#)' webpage. Please provide **a copy of the accommodation letter** to your assigned TA.

**Citation style:** This course uses the [Chicago Manual of Style 17th edition](#) author-date citation style (not footnotes). Consistent and accurate use of citations would help you avoid committing plagiarism in your writing. Cheating and plagiarism are serious academic offenses. [Read more](#) on how to avoid plagiarism.

**Academic integrity:** It is a student's responsibility to include accurate [citations](#) of sources and to understand what constitutes [academic integrity](#) at UofT. 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 UofT's [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#).

**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 UofT. [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 and assignments. In other words, this course uses the additive grading strategy. A grading rubric is provided for each assignment and posted on Quercus.

**Grading:** Assignments are graded by TAs. Please direct all questions about grades and grading to your assigned TA. Assignments are graded using the grading rubric on Quercus.

**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. Grades are released on a weekly basis. 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 are for your information only, so you can view and track your progress through the course. No grades are considered official, including any posted in 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 me 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 course 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 only. **Participation is graded by TAs and their grade is final.** With regard to 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 that identifies how and why you think the grade you received does not accurately evaluate the work you submitted. If, subsequent to your first appeal, you are convinced that the mark is still incorrect, you may appeal in writing, within 48 hours after receiving the re-graded essay from your TA, to the course instructor. 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 directly. 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

If you are struggling with university-level writing, you can get individual consultations with trained writing instructors at UofT's [Writing Centres](#).

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

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.

## 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](#).

## General Advice on Writing

- Remember the assignment's purpose while you write.
- Meet with your assigned TA in advance to ask questions about the assignment.
- Relate your thinking and analysis to the course's broader theme ("Democracy in the Social Media Age").
- 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 to a writing instructor and get feedback.
- 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.

## 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 UofT [Student Life Health and Wellness](#) website.

**In distress or need emotional support?** Please contact [UofT 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 UofT 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 UofT, 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 your instructor or 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.

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## Weekly Course Materials

Please note that the course schedule is subject to change.

Required materials must be completed before class in the week for which they are assigned.

Recommended materials are for further investigation about a topic or to help students prepare to write the assignments.

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

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### Week 1: Introduction and Overview (Sep. 4)

In this week's lecture, we go through the course's subject matter, breakdown the assignments, and explain tutorials. We talk about course readings, grade appeals, academic integrity, and accessibility issues. We also discuss the resources available at UofT 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**

- “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>.
- Graff, G., & Birkenstein, C. (2018). *“They say / I say” : the moves that matter in academic writing* (Fourth edition.). W. W. Norton & Company.

## Week 2: What is the Internet? What is Social Media? (Sep. 11)

- **Required Readings**

- Bob Dormon. (2016) “How the Internet works: Submarine fiber, brains in jars, and coaxial cables,” *Ars Technica*.  
<https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2016/05/how-the-internet-works-s-submarine-cables-data-centres-last-mile/>
- Margetts, Helen. 2019. “Rethinking Democracy with Social Media.” *The Political Quarterly* 90 (S1): 107–23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12574>.

- **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/>.
- Lee, Timothy B. 2014. “The Internet, Explained.” *Vox*. June 16, 2014.  
<https://www.vox.com/2014/6/16/18076282/the-internet>.
- Ortiz Freuler, Juan. 2023. “The Weaponization of Private Corporate Infrastructure: Internet Fragmentation and Coercive Diplomacy in the 21st Century.” *Global Media and China* 8 (1): 6–23.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/20594364221139729>.
- Bueger, Christian, and Tobias Liebetrau. 2021. “Protecting Hidden Infrastructure: The Security Politics of the Global Submarine Data Cable Network.” *Contemporary Security Policy* 42 (3): 391–413.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2021.1907129>.
- CBC Massey Lecture 1: [Look at that Device in Your Hand](#)
- [CBC Spark Episode 482](#): The Politics of Technology
- [CBC Spark Episode: Spark Summer Episode One](#): From Sea to Sky (especially the second half on undersea cables)

## Week 3: Privacy rights and democracy (Sep. 18)

- **Required Readings**

- Diab, Robert. 2024. "Does TikTok Pose a Security Threat to Canadians?" The Conversation. March 15, 2024.  
<http://theconversation.com/does-tiktok-pose-a-security-threat-to-canadians-225871>.
- Segado-Boj, Francisco, and Jesús Díaz-Campo. 2020. "Social Media and Its Intersections with Free Speech, Freedom of Information and Privacy. An Analysis." *Revista ICONO14. Revista Científica de Comunicación y Tecnologías Emergentes* 18 (1): 231–55. <https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v18i1.1379>.

- **Recommended Readings and Other Materials**

- Boutilier, Alex. 2024. "RCMP Slammed for Private Surveillance Use to Trawl Social Media, 'Darknet' - National | Globalnews.Ca," February 15, 2024.  
<https://globalnews.ca/news/10298074/rcmp-privacy-commissioner-report-social-media/>.
- Solomon, Howard. 2023. "Compel Social Media Apps to Toughen Their Privacy, Trust Practices, Parliament Told | IT World Canada News." *IT World Canada*, November 28, 2023.  
<https://www.itworldcanada.com/article/compel-social-media-apps-to-toughen-their-privacy-trust-practices-parliament-told/554140>.
- "Weak Privacy, Weak Procurement: The State of Facial Recognition in Canada." n.d. Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy. Accessed August 24, 2024.  
<https://www.mediatechdemocracy.com/all-work/weak-privacy-weak-procurement-the-state-of-facial-recognition-in-canada>.
- Murdoch, Blake. 2021. "Privacy and Artificial Intelligence: Challenges for Protecting Health Information in a New Era." *BMC Medical Ethics* 22 (1): 122.  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12910-021-00687-3>.
- 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>.

## Week 4: Freedom of expression and democracy (Sep. 25)

- **Required Readings**

- Singh, Spandana. 2022. "Free Speech vs Online Safety? You Shouldn't Have to Choose." *New America* (blog). June 13, 2022. <http://newamerica.org/oti/blog/free-speech-vs-online-safety-you-shouldnt-have-to-choose/>.
- Nekrasov, Michael, Lisa Parks, and Elizabeth Belding. 2017. "Limits to Internet Freedoms: Being Heard in an Increasingly Authoritarian World." In *Proceedings of the 2017 Workshop on Computing Within Limits*, 119–28. LIMITS '17. New York, NY, USA: Association for Computing Machinery. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3080556.3080564>.

- **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>.
- Newman, Dwight. 2024. "Ottawa's 'Online Harms' Bill Actually Threatens Marginalized Communities: Op-Ed." *Fraser Institute* (blog). March 3, 2024. <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/article/ottawas-online-harms-bill-actually-threatens-marginalized-communities>.
- 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>.
- Singh, Spandana, and Dillon Roseen. 2018. "Perspectives and Policies on the Digital Safety of Vulnerable Communities." New America Foundation. <http://newamerica.org/millennials/reports/perspectives-and-policies-digital-safety-vulnerable-communities/>.
- Masferrer, Aniceto. 2023. "The Decline of Freedom of Expression and Social Vulnerability in Western Democracy." *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law*, March, 1–33. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11196-023-09990-1>.

## Week 5: Consent, privacy, and digital identity (Oct. 2)

**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**

- Ndlovu, Thapelo. 2024. "Essential Reforms Needed to Elevate Biometric Data Protection: Botswana's Biometric Data Security Challenges and Urgent Calls for

Legal Reforms.” APC (blog). July 5, 2024.

<https://www.apc.org/en/news/essential-reforms-needed-elevate-biometric-data-protection-botswanas-biometric-data-security>.

- Beduschi, Ana. 2019. “Digital Identity: Contemporary Challenges for Data Protection, Privacy and Non-Discrimination Rights.” *Big Data & Society* 6 (2): 2053951719855091. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951719855091>.

- **Recommended Readings and Other Materials**

- Vladimirova, Margarita. 2024. “Your Face for Sale: Anyone Can Legally Gather and Market Your Facial Data without Explicit Consent.” *The Conversation*. March 4, 2024.  
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## Week 6: Big Tech, 'Big Brother,' and surveillance capitalism (Oct. 9)

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## Week 7: Social media regulation and content moderation (Oct. 16)

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- Kozyreva, Anastasia, Stefan M. Herzog, Stephan Lewandowsky, Ralph Hertwig, Philipp Lorenz-Spreen, Mark Leiser, and Jason Reifler. 2023. “Resolving Content Moderation Dilemmas between Free Speech and Harmful Misinformation.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 120 (7). <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2210666120>.
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## Week 8: Transnational activism and digital repression (Oct. 23)

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- Silverberg, David. 2022. “Digital Repression across Borders Is on the Rise.” *MIT Technology Review*, July 8, 2022. <https://www.technologyreview.com/2022/07/08/1055582/digital-repression-across-borders-is-on-the-rise/>.
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- Cebul, Matthew D. 2022. “Nonviolent Action in the Era of Digital Authoritarianism: Hardships and Innovations.” United States Institute of Peace.  
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## Week 9: Disinformation, elections, and democracy (Nov. 6)

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- Bond, Shannon. 2023. “Meta Warns That China Is Stepping up Its Online Social Media Influence Operations.” *NPR*, November 30, 2023, sec. Untangling Disinformation.  
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- Olaniran, Bolane, and Indi Williams. 2020. “Social Media Effects: Hijacking Democracy and Civility in Civic Engagement.” *Platforms, Protests, and the Challenge of Networked Democracy*, February, 77–94.  
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<https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/01/countering-disinformation-effectively-an-evidence-based-policy-guide?lang=en>.

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- 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>.

## Week 10: Internet censorship and shutdowns (Nov. 13)

**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

- Mhlungu, Gugulethu. 2022. "Why Internet Access Needs to Be Considered a Basic Human Right." *Global Citizen*. July 14, 2022. <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/internet-access-basic-human-right/>.
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### ● Recommended Readings and Other Materials

- Richards, Cathy. 2023. "Staying Online During Internet Shutdowns." *The Engine Room* (blog). August 7, 2023. <https://www.theengineroom.org/library/staying-online-during-internet-shutdowns/>.
- Human Rights Watch. 2020. "Shutting Down the Internet to Shut Up Critics." <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/global-5>.
- 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>.
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## Week 11: Ecological impact of the Internet and social media (Nov. 20)

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- Obringer, Renee, Benjamin Rachunok, Debora Maia-Silva, Maryam Arbabzadeh, Roshanak Nateghi, and Kaveh Madani. 2021. "The Overlooked Environmental Footprint of Increasing Internet Use." *Resources, Conservation and Recycling* 167 (April): 105389. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resconrec.2020.105389>.
- Daigle, Thomas. 2020. "'Completely Unsustainable': How Streaming and Other Data Demands Take a Toll on the Environment." *CBC News*, January 2, 2020.  
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- PBS News. 2024. "The Big Environmental Costs of Rising Demand for Big Data to Power the Internet." *PBS News*, June 22, 2024, sec. Science.  
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/the-big-environmental-costs-of-rising-demand-for-big-data-to-power-the-internet>.
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## Week 12: What to Do? (Nov. 27)

- **Required Readings**

- Miller, Michael L., and Cristian Vaccari. 2020. "Digital Threats to Democracy: Comparative Lessons and Possible Remedies." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 25 (3): 333–56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161220922323>.

- **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>.
- Flonk, Daniëlle, Markus Jachtenfuchs, and Anke S. Obendiek. 2020. "Authority Conflicts in Internet Governance: Liberals vs. Sovereignists?" *Global Constitutionalism* 9 (2): 364–86. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S2045381720000167>.
- 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>.