POL 379H1S Digital Era Government and Policy Design

Location: online via Zoom (see Quercus for link)
Time: Tuesdays 10am - 12pm
Instructor: Jonathan Craft
Drop in Office Hour: Thursdays 11:30-12:30 pm (via Quercus Zoom link)
Email: jonathan.craft@utoronto.ca

Course Description:
Digital government is now a worldwide phenomenon and raises important questions about how government works and how policy gets made in an increasingly digital world. This course will look at digital government experiences and movements within the context of Ontario, Canada, North America, and globally. It begins by exploring foundational concepts linked to digital government transformation and practice, with a focus on critically assessing how governments are attempting to organize and operate in digital ways. The second half of the course focuses on applied policymaking in the digital era. Students will explore how policy is designed and delivered using digital ways of working. Students will engage with case studies and applied exercises to develop new skills and familiarity with digital government practices including user centered design and agile methods.

** I reserve the right to modify the syllabus to reflect the pace of the course**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
To familiarize students with digital government approaches, principles, and develop applied policy skills.

COURSE FORMAT
All classes will be held online Tuesdays between 10am and 12 pm EST via Zoom (link provided in Quercus).

Each week will begin with a lecture by the instructor and many sessions will involve class exercises. **You will often be asked to participate, engage, and work during the class time.** Some classes in the second half of the course may include dedicated time for groups to work on assignments with assistance from the instructor.

SOFTWARE & HARDWARE REQUIREMENTS
All course materials are available through Quercus or the library. This course requires you to have an internet enabled device. I strongly recommend it be a laptop for functionality to use google docs, slides, and other tools as required. Students will also be required to use Mural, a software design to facilitate online group work. Details on your free access to it and how to use it will be reviewed in class.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION
Detailed instructions for all written assignments, including complete submission instructions, will be distributed as the course progresses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Dates &amp; Submission</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-class engagements</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Weekly starting Wk2, due online</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group policy brief outline</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Due February 12th, online via Quercus by 1159pm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual analytical paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Due March 9 online via Quercus by 1159pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group personas &amp; user journey(s)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Due April 6th, online via Quercus by 1159pm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group final briefing note</td>
<td>25%</td>
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Pre-class engagements (15%):
Beginning Week 2 you will answer a brief set of questions or complete an activity related to the assigned course materials prior to (due midnight before) class. Your responses will be graded based on demonstrated effort and quality of the responses on a credit/no credit basis.

Individual Analytical Paper (30%)
The scope of digital government is massive. Students will write a 2000 word paper that explores a specific topic relevant to digital government (e.g. privacy, access to information, algorithmic decision making). The essay is analytical and must include a clear central argument supported by research. It will meaningfully use research from at least 6 academic/practitioner sources from outside the course in addition to integrating pertinent course materials. The topics, detailed instructions, and essay prompt will be distributed Week 3. Due March 9 online via Quercus.

Group Policy Outline (15%)
In Groups of five, students will prepare a one page, single spaced, policy backgrounder outline. It will: i) clearly articulate a realistic policy problem the students wants to address (must be
instructor approved); ii) provide general and concise background/summary information on the policy issue, 3) identify any relevant policy positions or recommendations, and feature high level key research sources (at least ten sources from academic and applied practitioner grey literature e.g. government reports on your topic etc). Due February 12th via Quercus.

**Group Persona(s) and User Journey(s) (15%).** Groups will also submit policy ‘products’ including proto-personas and user journey(s) maps as applicable to their group policy challenge. Detailed instructions will be provided. Due April 6th via Quercus as part of your submitted group policy briefing note assignment.

**Group Policy Briefing Note (25%):** A 5 page (and 1 page annex), double spaced, briefing note on your policy challenge. Details on the format, requirements, and expectations will be provided in class. Due April 6th via Quercus.

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Video Sessions and Recording**
Students are encouraged to participate in lectures as they would any in-person class. Although we will not force students to turn on cameras/microphones, we strongly encourage you to do so, in order to maximize your learning experience and that of your peers. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the instructor.

To ensure accessibility throughout the term, lectures may be recorded and made available for students after each session. You are free to view/download these videos for your own academic use, but you should not share or use them for any other purpose (e.g., posting to Youtube, etc.) without the instructor’s permission. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the instructors.

**Email**
Please put the course code in the subject line! I normally respond to email within 48 hours. Please note that email received during weekends and after business hours may take longer to answer, so do not leave your requests or queries until the last minute. Also, please do not submit course assignments via email.

**Accessibility & Accommodations**
Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Accessibility Services Office as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let them and me know your needs, the quicker we
can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course see www.accessibility.utoronto.ca

**Extensions and Late Penalties**

Work is due on its due date. Extensions will rarely be granted and only under exceptional circumstances. The expectation is that you will plan adequately to turn in work on time. If you are having issues, please be in touch with the instructor as soon as possible. In rare cases where work is accepted after a due date, a late penalty of 5% per day (including weekends) will be applied.

**Group Work**

Group assignments are generally assessed on a collective basis, meaning you receive the same grade as the rest of your group. However, if circumstances dictate – for example, if you or a teammate do not make collegial contributions to the group – I may choose to assess the assignment on an individual basis, meaning you may receive a different grade than the rest of your group. Any issues in your group’s work should be brought to the instructors attention as soon as possible.

**Copyright**

Course materials, including recorded lectures and slides, are the instructor’s intellectual property covered by the Copyright Act, RSC 1985, c C-42. Course materials posted on Quercus are for registered students only and may not be posted to other websites or media without the express permission of the instructor. Unauthorized reproduction, copying, or use of online recordings will constitute copyright infringement.

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity**

It is the responsibility of each student to be able to demonstrate the originality of his or her work. This applies to individual and group deliverables. Failure to properly reference figures, concepts, and quotations that are not your own will result in academic penalties, as required by the University of Toronto’s policy on plagiarism. At a minimum, for every assignment, the sources of all data and ideas must be properly referenced using a standard academic referencing style, such as Chicago. If you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism or how to reference sources, please visit: [http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize)

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

**Health and Wellness**
I encourage you to consult the Graduate Student Wellness Portal to learn about mental health services, resources, and academic supports available on campus [uoft.me/wellnessportal](uoft.me/wellnessportal).

If at any time you feel unprepared for, or overwhelmed by, the workload in this course/program:

- Speak with me directly, either during office hours or by appointment
- Consult with department program staff
- Get in touch with your UofT [Writing Centre](https://writingcentre.utoronto.ca)
- Contact the [Academic Success Centre](https://www.academic-success.utoronto.ca) to learn about available resources and services, such as writing groups, or to consult with a learning strategist

If you (or a friend or colleague) feel sick, anxious, or depressed, to the point that it is affecting your (or their) abilities or relationships:

- Visit the [Health and Wellness Centre](https://www.health-wellness.utoronto.ca), 214 College St (at St. George St.), which offers general health and nutrition services, as well as mental health services and support programs
- Call Good2Talk 1-866-925-5454 – a free, confidential helpline for university students, available 24/7/365, with professional counselling, information and referrals for mental health, addictions and well-being
- In case of emergency, call 911, then Campus Community Police 416-978-2222, who will direct your call to the right service

**LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE**

**Part I – Context and Core Concepts**

**Week 1 (January 12): Introduction: Course overview and logistics**

*Goal: Get to know each other, gain clarity on the how the course is going to work*

*Watch before 1st lecture:* Scott Brison, *Democratic Government is there an App for that?*  
*Read:* Loosemore, T. *Definition of Digital* (it’s a tweet).

**Week 2 (January 19): What is digital government, how did we get here, why does it matter?**

*Goal: Situate digital government within the broader digital governance context*

*Read:*

**Week 3 (January 26) Digital Meets Bureaucracy**

*Goal: Understanding the structures and aims of digital government*


Week 4 (February 2): Making Policy: A Primer on Policy Design

Goal: Get the basics on what policy design is, and how it works


Week 5 (February 9) Digital’s Critique and Approach to Policy Design

Goal: To think critically about the challenges of traditional policy design and the value added of digital ways of working to address policy issues.

Watch before Week 5 Lecture: Tom Hulme, What can we learn from shortcuts?

Read:


Week 6 (February 16): *** no classes, reading week ***

Part II Applying Digital Ways of Working

Week 7 (February 23) Human Centered Design and Iterative Approaches

Goal: Expose you to human centered and iterative methods at the heart of digital government

Read:


Week 8 (March 2): Human Centered Policy Making in Practice

**Goal:** Develop a familiarization with user research and user centered design in practice. Develop proficiency with journey mapping and personas

**Read:**
Code for America. (2018) Designing user-centered policy Using agile methods to address affordable housing in San Francisco (*please also watch the embedded video at the end of the post*)
Three part series on the USDA Farm Loan program including
1. What Is a Customer Journey Map?
2. How Do You Read a Journey Map?
3. How Do You Use a Journey Map?

**Skim:** USDA Farm loans Customer Journey Mapping final report

Week 9 (March 9): Revisiting problem definition

**Goal:** How can a focus on human centered and iterative approaches help us to rethink how we define and frame policy problems?

**Read:**
Ling, J., Clarke, A. Craft, J. (2020). Digital @ Work: Transforming Ontario’s Student Assistance Program. Toronto: Policy Ready/IPAC

**Watch before Week 8 Lecture:** Dive Student Aid: Episode 2 “Setting the Scene”, “Getting the message right” and Episode 9 “Turning Policy into Action”

Week 10 (March 16): Ideation and Prototyping for Policy

**Goal:** Orientation to prototyping for policy and understanding the link between policy and product.

**Read:**

Week 11 (March 23): Performance Management and Digital Government

**Goal:** Orientation to the challenges and approaches governments are using to evaluate and manage performance in digital government.

**Read:**

**Week 12 (March 30): Enabling and Implementing Digital for Policy**

*Goal: Appreciate the enabling conditions, key barriers, and limitations of digital government. Develop some practical strategies on how to apply these practices to your policy work.*

*Read:*
Dacanay, H. *Enabling Conditions, Not Just Heroics.*

**Week 13 (April 6): Informal Policy Project Debrief and Class Wrap Up Exercises.**

No readings!