INF2318H. Platform Politics and Power

Instructor
Kaushar Mahetaji

Email
kaushar.mahetaji@mail.utoronto.ca

Time and Place
Wednesdays: 6:00–9:00pm
Bissell Building 728

Office Hours
By appointment
In person or Zoom

Course Description

This course focuses on the technological, social, cultural and political economic organization of media and communication by critically engaging with digital platforms and apps. The cultural industries are undergoing rapid change and platforms are at the core of these transformations. Google, Apple, Meta, and Amazon, complemented by Tencent and Microsoft, have become the most valuable and profitable companies in the world. As a result, the platformization of cultural production, distribution, and marketing poses new challenges for citizens, content producers, politicians, and businesses. As platforms are continuously upgraded and becoming near ubiquitous, how do we account for the relationships between platform companies and users? How do platforms operationalize power, and how can we systematically analyze a platform's history and its position within the digital ecosystem?

Course Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of INF2318H, students will be able to:

1. Use different disciplinary and theoretical frameworks to understand contemporary issues relating to platform power and politics;

2. Position themselves within the (sub)fields of platform studies, app studies, and software studies, as well as within debates among political economists and business scholars;

3. Understand and employ (digital) methods for in-depth, structured platform and app analysis;

4. Analyze, research, and critique platforms as "techno-cultural" and "socioeconomic" structures.

Relationship Between Course Learning Outcomes and Program Learning Outcomes

The course learning outcomes (CLOs) align with the program learning outcomes (PLOs) outlined for the Master of Information program. INF2318 equips students with an understanding of platform processes, logic, and strategies by drawing on diverse perspectives from information disciplines (e.g., media studies, cultural studies, and human-computer interaction) (PLO1). At the same time, students learn to navigate platforms in their day-to-day and professional lives, reflecting on the consequences of the platform economy for information professionals and the governance of information (PLO2). Through critical writing (i.e., essay or policy brief) and peer review, students develop research skills, becoming familiar with publication and knowledge dissemination in the information sciences (PLO3). They acknowledge the contextual, relational, and dynamic nature of digital technologies; platforms evolve within app and platform ecosystems due to the input of many different user groups (PLO4). Students note implications of "platform politics and power" for information management today (PLO5), and they are encouraged to continue to critically interrogate platforms outside coursework (PLO6).

Course Structure

There are four main principles that inform the structure of this course. These principles are summarized in Figure 1. See Course Schedule for a more detailed breakdown.

1. **Platform companies develop their business models in ways that further the processes of datafication, platformization, and infrastructuralization.** Datafication describes the transformation of aspects of human life into data that can be commodified.[1] Platformization speaks to the extension of platform companies' data-oriented infrastructural, economic, and governmental logics across and beyond the web.[2] The final process, infrastructuralization, refers to the role platform companies play in sustaining critical systems across various industries.[3]

2. **Platform logic is becoming ubiquitous.** Platform logic is increasingly common across industries, from education (e.g., Google Classroom, Coursera) to entertainment (e.g., TikTok, Netflix), across regions, from China (e.g., WeChat, DiDi) to Brazil (e.g., iFood).

3. **Platform companies use software to facilitate transactions between different user groups.** Platforms can be conceptualized as a "mediatory device enabling third-party transactions" between platform users, including policymakers, data brokers, and UX designers.[4] In traditional economics, the third parties are referred to as the different "sides" of the platform. To manage the various sides and generate value, or operate a "multi-sided market,"[5] the platform company uses digital software.

4. **Platforms are positioned as opaque but can be interrogated.** Researching platform companies is difficult because platform companies, for the purposes of competition and security, limit access. This difficulty is amplified by the fact that platforms are highly complex—economically, socially, technically, politically, and legally, and ever-changing. Regardless, researchers across disciplines, from information systems to cultural studies, along with investigative journalists, have proposed innovative methods for sourcing and analyzing data about platform companies.

This course is divided into three main parts; each part maps onto one of the three processes that define platform logic: **datafication**, **platformization**, and **infrastructuralization**. We move from data to platforms to infrastructure, increasing the scale of our objects of study. Each class we investigate the politics and power associated with platforms in the context of a **particular industry** and a specific **software** that facilitates interactions between user groups or a specific **user group**. To do so, we explore **methods** that probe the supposed opacity of platforms.

The following breaks down the structure of each three-hour class. Each component is 30 to 60 minutes.

- **Theory**. Examine politics and power by borrowing concepts from different disciplines, recognizing the interdisciplinary nature of platform studies.
- **Application**. Analyze concepts from the theory section in a real-world context.
- **Method**. Devise critical approaches to examine the concepts discussed in the theory section.

---

1. Mejias, Ulises A., and Nick Couldry. 2019. "Datafication." *Internet Policy Review* 8 (4): 1–10. [journal article]
2. Nieborg, David B., and Thomas Poell. 2018. "The Platformization of Cultural Production: Theorizing the Contingent Cultural Commodity." *New Media & Society* 20 (11): 4275–92. [journal article]
3. Plantin, Jean-Christophe, Carl Lagoze, Paul N. Edwards, and Christian Sandvig. 2018. "Infrastructure Studies Meet Platform Studies in the Age of Google and Facebook." *New Media & Society* 20 (1): 293–310. [journal article]
4. Steinberg, Marc. 2022. "From Automobile Capitalism to Platform Capitalism: Toyotism as a Prehistory of Digital Platforms." *Organization Studies* 43 (7): 1069–90 (p. 1072). [journal article]
5. Rochet, Jean-Charles, and Jean Tirole. 2003. "Platform Competition in Two-Sided Markets." *Journal of the European Economic Association* 1 (4): 990–1029. [journal article]

Course Assignments

Detailed instructions for all assignments will be made available on Quercus.

Date	Assignment	Value	Description
Ongoing	Participation	10%	Contribute to in-class discussions and in-class activities and complete exit passes.
Sept. 25	Topic statement and resources	10%	This assignment sets up the final project where you will choose between an essay or a policy brief. For this assignment think about a research question (if you are interested in the essay option) or problem statement (if you are interested in the policy brief). Ensure that your topic considers platform politics and power. Include a reference list of 5 to 7 sources that you have identified as relevant for your topic.
Oct. 16	Annotated bibliography	20%	Choose 5 to 7 sources for an annotated bibliography. These can be the same sources listed in the previous assignment. For each source, provide an annotation, considering usefulness, credibility, and the purpose of the source in the context of your final project. Rather than summarizing, work to identify broader themes and arguments that emerge through your chosen sources. Each annotation should be around 150 to 250 words.
Oct. 23	Peer feedback	20%	Provide constructive feedback on a peer's annotated bibliography. Consider suggesting other sources and reviewing for, among other components, relevance, consistency, clarity, and organization (1,000 to 1,500 words).
Nov. 20 and Nov. 27	Presentation	15%	Present final project, considering key findings and reflecting on the research process (maximum of 10 minutes).
Nov. 27	Final project	25%	Students have two options available to them for the final project. Students may submit an essay (3,000 to 4,000 words) or a policy brief (1,500 to 2,000 words). Note that while policy briefs as a genre are more concise, they tend to be more prescriptive and limiting in structure.

On the Relationship Between Assignments and Course Learning Outcomes
To complete the scaffolded assignment, students use different disciplinary and theoretical frameworks to understand platform politics and power (CLO1). They draw on diverse information disciplines, including platform studies, app studies, software studies, political economy, and business studies for sources (Topic Statement and Resources, Annotated Bibliography) (CLO2). They rely on innovative methodologies to understand the techno-cultural and socioeconomic impacts of platforms (Final Project) (CLO3). Students have opportunities to critique platforms through participation and garner feedback on their analyses of platform companies through peer review (Peer Feedback) (CLO4).

On Assignment Structure
The scaffolded assignments, along with insights gained from participation, contribute to a larger final project—an essay or policy brief—investigating platform politics and power. This course recognizes that the Faculty of Information comprises students from various professional and academic backgrounds. Students' diverse perspectives are seen as an asset, and the assignments are intended to support students in their professional and/or academic goals—why students are provided a choice between essay and policy brief.

On Connecting Assignments to Dissertation Work
Please reach out if you are interested in using this course to support your MI thesis or PhD work—e.g., submitting a thesis chapter or an empirical research article for your final project.

On Academic Dates and Deadlines
Please consult the Academic Dates and Deadlines page. Conflicts with religious observances should be brought to the attention of the course instructor and the Office of the Registrar and Student Services no later than the second week of classes. For more information, please see the Policy on Scheduling of Classes and Examinations and Other Accommodations for Religious Observances.

On Due Dates
Note all assignments are due by **11:59pm** with the exception of in-class assignments and your presentation slides (due before class by **5:00pm**). There is an expectation that assignments will be submitted on time. Late assignments will receive a deduction of 10% per day, and work that is handed in late will not be graded until after the final class. Please reach out as soon as possible should extenuating circumstances arise, and you require an extension.

On Grading Policies
Please consult the following resources from the Faculty of Information and the School of Graduate Studies, as they will form the basis for grading in the course.

- Grades and Grading Policies
- University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy
- Guidelines on the Use of INC, SDF & WDR

On Citations
There is no preferred citation style in this course. Rather, please ensure citations are included when necessary, correctly formatted, and consistent.

On Submission
Please do not submit assignments by email. Only assignments submitted using Quercus will be accepted. Please use single spacing for your submissions.

On Academic Integrity
Please consult the University's site on Academic Integrity. The Faculty of Information has a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism as defined in section B.I.1.(d) of the University's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. You should acquaint yourself with the Code. Please review the material in Cite it Right, and if you require further clarification, consult the resource How Not to Plagiarize. Cite it Right covers relevant parts of the U of T Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (1995). It is expected that all Faculty of Information students complete the Cite it Right module and the online quiz prior to the second week of classes of their first term.

On the Use of Generative AI
Submitted assignments must be original work produced by the individual student alone. In other words, students may not use artificial intelligence tools for writing—e.g., AI tools cannot be used to write the topic statement, the annotated bibliography entries, the peer feedback, the presentation, or the final project. However, the tools may be used to gather information from across sources and assimilate it for understanding.

Statement of Acknowledgement of Traditional Land

I (we) wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.
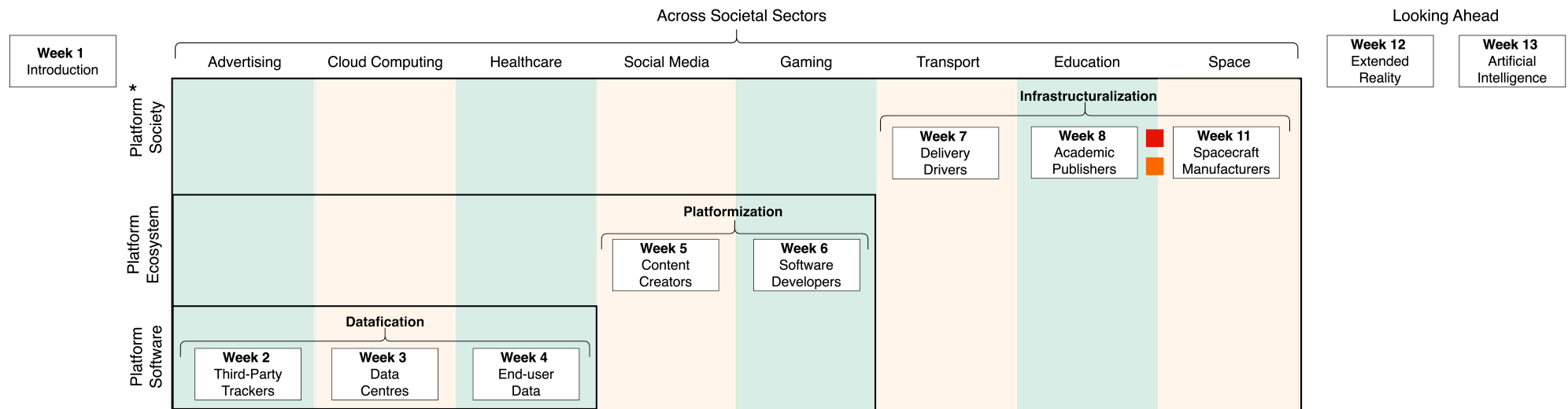
Course Overview

Figure 1: Overview of course content. Each week covers a particular platform software component or user group and societal sector. Note that there is no class on week 9 due to reading week (red square), and week 10 is a work period for you to workshop your final projects and receive feedback during class time (orange square). Weeks 12 and 13 include presentations in addition to content on extended reality and artificial intelligence. The term "platform society" in the figure (*) comes from the 2018 book *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*, co-authored by José van Dijck, Thomas Poell, and Martijn de Waal, published by Oxford University Press.

Course Schedule

Introduction

Week 1. Sept. 2–8: Course Overview

Key Question:
- What do we mean by "platform politics and power?" Which disciplines provide a productive entry point for understanding platform politics and power, and why are we devoting time to this topic?

Before Class:
- Nothing to review

During Class:
- Housekeeping: Syllabus, expectations
- Theory: Digital platforms, datafication, platformization, infrastructuralization
- Application: AI portraits with Replicate
- Method: Research creation

Due: 3-Minute Exit Pass (In Class)

Part 1. Datafication

Week 2. Sept. 9–15: Advertising and Third-Party Trackers

Key Question:
- What software mechanisms contribute to datafication?

Before Class:
- Mejias, Ulises A., and Nick Couldry. 2019. "Datafication." *Internet Policy Review* 8 (4): 1–10. [journal article]
- Alaimo, Cristina, and Jannis Kallinikos. 2017. "Computing the Everyday: Social Media as Data Platforms." *The Information Society* 33 (4): 175–91. [journal article]
- Manjoo, Farhad, and Nadieh Bremer. 2019. "I Visited 47 Sites. Hundreds of Trackers Followed Me." *The New York Times*, August 23, 2019, sec. Opinion. [news article]
- Pybus, Jennifer, and Mark Coté. 2024. "Super SDKs: Tracking Personal Data and Platform Monopolies in the Mobile." *Big Data & Society* 11 (1): 1–17. [journal article]

During Class:
- Theory: Critical data studies, datafication, platform monopoly, application programming interfaces (APIs), software development kits (SDKs)
- Application: Lemon8
- Method: Static and dynamic code analysis

Due: 3-Minute Exit Pass (In Class)

Week 3. Sept. 16–22: Cloud Computing and Data Centres

Key Question:
- What software systems sustain datafication, and what are the environmental impacts of these systems?

Before Class:
- Srnicek, Nick. 2016. "Chapter 2. Platform Capitalism." In *Platform Capitalism*, 27–55. John Wiley & Sons. [book chapter]
- Monroe, Dwayne, and Paris Marx. 2022. How the Cloud Reshaped the Internet. Podcast. Tech Won't Save Us. [podcast episode]
- Hu, Tung-Hui. 2016. "Data Centers and Data Bunkers." In *A Prehistory of the Cloud*, 79–110. MIT Press. [book chapter]
- Environmental Media Lab. 2022. "Exploring Art In and Around Data Centers." Critical Studies of the Cloud. [art projects]
- Pasek, Anne. 2019. "Managing Carbon and Data Flows: Fungible Forms of Mediation in the Cloud." *Culture Machine* 16: 1–15. [journal article]

During Class:
- Theory: Data centres, data infrastructure, data and the environment
- Application: Colo-X
- Method: Semiotic analysis[6]

Due: 3-Minute Exit Pass (In Class)

Week 4. Sept. 23–29: Healthcare and End-user Data

Key Question:
- What are the social and cultural impacts of datafication?

Before Class:
- Ebeling, Mary F. E. 2022. "Collecting Life." In *Afterlives of Data: Life and Debt Under Capitalist Surveillance*, 65–91. University of California Press. [book chapter]
- "The Estate of Henrietta Lacks vs. Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc." 2021. Baltimore, Maryland: United States District Court of Maryland. [court case]
- Schuhmacher, Alexander, Naomi Haefner, Katharina Honsberg, Jörg Goldhahn, and Oliver Gassmann. 2023. "The Dominant Logic of Big Tech in Healthcare and Pharma." *Drug Discovery Today* 28 (2): 1–8. [journal article]
- Meta. 2024. "Visualizations: Health." Data for Good. [data visualizations]

During Class:
- Theory: Data-driven business models, data collection, data capture
- Application: 23andMe and drug discovery
- Method: Financial analysis and legal analysis

Due: 3-Minute Exit Pass (In Class)
Due: Topic Statement and Resources (Quercus by 11:59pm on Sept. 25)

---

6. We will also consider strategies outlined in the following paper: Pasek, Anne. 2023. "Getting Into Fights With Data Centers: Or, a Modest Proposal for Reframing the Climate Politics of ICT." Experimental Methods and Media Lab (Trent University). [instructions]

Part 2. Platformization

Week 5. Sept. 30–Oct. 6: Social Media and Content Creators

Key Question:
- What is the impact of platformization on content creation work?

Before Class:
- Nieborg, David B., and Thomas Poell. 2018. "The Platformization of Cultural Production: Theorizing the Contingent Cultural Commodity." *New Media & Society* 20 (11): 4275–92. [journal article]
- Beer, David. 2017. "The Social Power of Algorithms." *Information, Communication & Society* 20 (1): 1–13. [journal article]
- Browne, Simone, and Sidney Fussell. 2020. "How Surveillance Has Always Reinforced Racism." *Wired.* June 19, 2020. [interview]
- Cobbe, Jennifer. 2021. "Algorithmic Censorship by Social Platforms: Power and Resistance." *Philosophy & Technology* 34 (4): 739–66. [journal article]

During Class:
- Theory: Platformization, creative labour, algorithms, surveillance, censorship
- Application: Sex education and censorship on TikTok
- Method: Semantic analysis

Guest lecturer: Emily Weekend [STREET Lab information]
Due: 3-Minute Exit Pass (In Class)

Week 6. Oct. 7–13: Gaming and Software Developers

Key Question:
- What is the impact of platformization on developers in the game industry?

Before Class:
- Bogost, Ian, and Nick Montfort. 2009. "Platform Studies: Frequently Questioned Answers." 1–6. [conference paper]
- Nieborg, David B., and Shenja van der Graaf. 2008. "The Mod Industries? The Industrial Logic of Non-Market Game Production." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 11 (2): 177–95. [journal article]
- Grimes, Sara M. 2021. "Playing as Making and Creating." In *Digital Playgrounds: The Hidden Politics of Children's Online Play Spaces, Virtual Worlds, and Connected Games*, 216–60. University of Toronto Press. [book chapter]
- Chew, Matthew Ming-tak. 2023. "Chinese Gold-Farming in the 2000s: Worker Empowerment and Local Development Through Video Games-Based Digital Labor." *Games and Culture* 18 (6): 783–803. [journal article]

During Class:
- Theory: Critical platform studies, platform as a process, immaterial labour, developer labour
- Application: Facebook Games
- Method: Platform historiography[7]

Guest lecturer: David B. Nieborg [biography]
Due: 3-Minute Exit Pass (In Class)

---

7. We will borrow from the following paper, applying the insights to the game industries: Helmond, Anne, and Fernando N. van der Vlist. 2019. "Social Media and Platform Historiography: Challenges and Opportunities." *Journal of Media History* 22 (1): 6–34. [journal article]

Part 3. Infrastructuralization

Week 7. Oct. 14–20: Transport and Delivery Drivers

Key Question:
- What is infrastructuralization, and how do platforms and infrastructure shape one another in the transportation sector?

Before Class:
- Plantin, Jean-Christophe, Carl Lagoze, Paul N Edwards, and Christian Sandvig. 2018. "Infrastructure Studies Meet Platform Studies in the Age of Google and Facebook." *New Media & Society* 20 (1): 293–310. [journal article]
- Garrett, Russ. 2024. "Open Infrastructure Map." Open Infrastructure Map: OpenStreetMap Database. 2024. [data visualization]
- Chen, Julie Yujie, and Ping Sun. 2020. "Temporal Arbitrage, Fragmented Rush, and Opportunistic Behaviors: The Labor Politics of Time in the Platform Economy." *New Media & Society* 22 (9): 1561–79. [journal article]
- Ray, Aditya. 2024. "Coping with Crisis and Precarity in the Gig Economy: 'Digitally Organised Informality', Migration and Socio-Spatial Networks among Platform Drivers in India." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, January, 1–18. [journal article]
- Liao, Rita. 2023. "Meet UniUni, Shein's Last-Mile Solution Delivered by Gig Drivers." TechCrunch. [news article]

During Class:
- Theory: Infrastructuralization, gig work, informal economy, migrant labour, temporal infrastructure, platform resistance, platform alternatives
- Application: Food delivery apps in Toronto
- Method: Walkthrough method[8]

Guest lecturer: Ashique Thuppilikkat [biography]
Due: 3-Minute Exit Pass (In Class)
Due: Annotated Bibliography (Quercus by 11:59pm on Oct. 16)

---

8. We will consult the following methods-based paper: Light, Ben, Jean Burgess, and Stefanie Duguay. 2018. "The Walkthrough Method: An Approach to the Study of Apps." *New Media & Society* 20 (3): 881–900. [journal article].

Week 8. Oct. 21–27: Education and Academic Publishers

Key Question:
- How do platforms and infrastructure shape one another in the education sector?

Before Class:
- Kerssens, Niels, and José van Dijck. 2023. "Transgressing Local, National, Global Spheres: The Blackboxed Dynamics of Platformization and Infrastructuralization of Primary Education." *Information, Communication & Society*, 1–17. [journal article]
- Komljenovic, Janja. 2021. "The Rise of Education Rentiers: Digital Platforms, Digital Data and Rents." *Learning, Media and Technology* 46 (3): 320–32. [journal article]
- Larivière, Vincent, Stefanie Haustein, and Philippe Mongeon. 2015. "The Oligopoly of Academic Publishers in the Digital Era." *PLOS ONE* 10 (6): 1–15. [journal article]
- UTL. 2023. "UTL-Publisher Relationships." University of Toronto Libraries. 2023. [web page]

During Class:
- Theory: Data sharing, data infrastructure, platform monopoly
- Application: University of Toronto Libraries' data infrastructure
- Method: Infrastructural inversion[9]

Guest lecturer: Ani Velinova
Due: 3-Minute Exit Pass (In Class)
Due: Peer Feedback (Quercus by 11:59pm on Oct. 23)

Week 9. Oct. 28–Nov. 3: Reading Week

Reading week—relax and travel virtually with Drive & Listen

Week 10. Nov. 4–10: Work Period

Opportunity for in-class feedback on final project

---

9. Refer to the following for more information on "infrastructural inversion:" Kaltenbrunner, Wolfgang. 2015. "Infrastructural Inversion as a Generative Resource in Digital Scholarship." *Science as Culture* 24 (1): 1–23. [journal article]

Week 11. Nov. 11–17: Space and Spacecraft Manufacturers

Key Question:
- How do platforms and infrastructure shape one another in the space industry?

Before Class:
- Shammas, Victor L., and Tomas B. Holen. 2019. "One Giant Leap for Capitalistkind: Private Enterprise in Outer Space." *Palgrave Communications* 5 (1): 1–9. [journal article]
- Witze, Alexandra. 2019. "SpaceX Launch Highlights Threat to Astronomy from 'Megaconstellations.'" *Nature* 575 (7782): 268–69. [journal article]
- Graydon, Matthew, and Lisa Parks. 2020. "'Connecting the Unconnected': A Critical Assessment of US Satellite Internet Services." *Media, Culture & Society* 42 (2): 260–76. [journal article]
- Starlink Map. 2024. "Map." Starlink Satellite Tracker. April 26, 2024. [data visualization]

During Class:
- Theory: Communication infrastructure, platform monopoly, platform capitalism, commercialization of space, platform–government relationships
- Application: SpaceX in northern Canada and the United States
- Method: Thematic analysis of government publications[10]

Due: 3-Minute Exit Pass (In Class)

Looking Ahead

Week 12. Nov. 18–24: Across Industries, Extended Reality

Key Question:
- How might extended reality (i.e., augmented reality, virtual reality) shape platform politics and power?

Before Class:
- Barrick, Sarah, Rachel Cross, Patricia Dooley, Jean Chin, Katerina Vasiliou, and Tiffany Madruga. 2024. XR World Build Capture and Playback Engine. United States US20240112418A1, filed December 20, 2022, and issued April 4, 2024. [patent]

During Class:
- Share final projects

Due: Presentation Slides (Quercus by 5:00pm on Nov. 20, regardless of presentation date)
Due: 10-Minute Presentations (In Class)
Due: 3-Minute Exit Pass (In Class)

---

10. Refer to the following for more information on thematic analysis: Clarke, Victoria, and Virginia Braun. 2016. "Thematic analysis." *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 12 (3): 297–98. [journal article]

Week 13. Nov. 25–Dec. 1: Across Industries, Artificial Intelligence

Key Question:

- How might artificial intelligence shape platform politics and power?

Before Class:

- Appupen, Lauren Daudet. 2024. *Dream Machine: A Portrait of Artificial Intelligence.* MIT Press. [graphic novel]

During Class:

- Share final projects

Due: 10-Minute Presentations (In Class)
Due: 3-Minute Exit Pass (In Class)
Due: Final Project (Quercus by 11:59pm on Nov. 27)

Communication Policies

Please use your University of Toronto email, not the Quercus inbox feature when sending emails. Emails will be answered to the best of my ability within 48 hours on weekdays. Please allow additional time on weekends and holidays. Please review the syllabus and assignment instructions on Quercus before sending an email.

Additional Support

On Writing Support

As stated in the Faculty of Information's Grade Interpretation Guidelines, "work that is not well written and grammatically correct will not generally be considered eligible for a grade in the A range, regardless of its quality in other respects." With this in mind, please make use of the writing support provided to graduate students by the SGS Graduate Centre for Academic Communication. The services are designed to target the needs of both native and non-native speakers and all programs are free. Please consult the current SGS Workshops Schedule for more information.

On Library Support

The University of Toronto Libraries is comprised of over forty libraries across three campuses; millions of journals, books, and other materials; and a wealth of services to help you study, learn, research, and publish. The Information Studies research guide can get you started with links to the most relevant databases and search tools for the MI program. Reach out to the library for research help online or make an appointment with your liaison librarian, Judith Logan.

On Accommodations

Students with diverse learning styles and/or accessibility needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me, student services and/or the Accessibility Services Office as soon as possible. Students who believe they require accommodations and are unsure where to begin can speak to an academic advisor in student services for guidance and referrals.

Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals to supportive services and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let us know your needs, the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course. Once you have obtained an accommodation plan from Accessibility Services, please share your accommodation letter with your instructor and student services.

Students who have already obtained accommodations from the Accessibility Services Office are encouraged to share their letter with their instructor and with student services in the first week of class. Students should discuss potential accommodations in consultation with their Accessibility Advisor and instructor to understand what may be possible and how the instructor wishes to be informed when an accommodation needs to be actioned. It is the student's responsibility to discuss any extension requests, where possible, in advance of course deadlines.

To book an appointment with an Accessibility Advisor, please connect with the Accessibility Services front desk via email at accessibility.services@utoronto.ca or call (416) 978-8060. Consultation appointments are available to discuss any questions about the Accessibility Services registration process and/or potential accommodation support. The on-location Accessibility Advisor at the Faculty of Information is Michael Mercer.

Weekly drop-ins are available for registered students. For more information, visit Accessibility Services.

On Declaring an Absence in ACORN

Students who miss an academic obligation and wish to seek academic consideration in a course may declare an absence using the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool. Students who declare an absence in ACORN should expect to receive reasonable academic consideration from their instructor without the need to present additional supporting documentation. Students can only use the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool once per academic term (e.g., the fall term) for a maximum period of 7 consecutive calendar days.

The ACORN Absence Declaration Tool requires students to select the course(s) they wish to have academic consideration granted, as well as provide the email address(es) to whom their course syllabus identifies as the contact (e.g., instructor, advisor). A record of the absence is sent to the self-provided email(s) at the time of submission, and a receipt of the absence declaration is also sent to the student's University of Toronto email address. Submitting an absence declaration does not initiate the process of academic consideration. It is the student's responsibility to arrange for academic consideration by contacting the course instructor using the contact information provided in the syllabus. Students who have already used one absence declaration in a term will be restricted from declaring any further absences using the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool. Students are required to arrange any further academic consideration directly with their instructor and/or student services advisor. Students may be asked to provide supporting documentation as evidence of their absences such as the University approved verification of illness form (VOI).

On Health and Wellness

The Faculty of Information has a Wellness Counsellor & Coordinator available to its students. Appointments are available Monday-Friday during the academic year. Contact Health & Wellness, 416-978-8030 ext. 5, to book an appointment with a Wellness Counsellor or for questions about the counselling service. Students can request that they would like to meet with the "iSchool Counsellor" to access counselling on campus.

Students can also choose to see a counsellor during the academic year and over the summer at the Health & Wellness Centre, located at 700 Bay St., during its hours of operation. Numerous additional health, wellness and counselling services are offered through the University of Toronto's Health and Wellness Centre. You can access free mental health and wellbeing services at Health & Wellness such as same day counselling, brief counselling, medical care, skill-building workshops and drop-in peer 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 learn more at uoft.me/mentalhealthcare.

The Health & Wellness Centre's Medical Services Clinic provides a wide range of medical services for U of T students. These services include routine health care services, such as sexual and reproductive health counselling, allergy care, nutrition consultation, and support with many other health concerns. Call the medical services clinic at 416-978-8030 ext. 2 to schedule an appointment or explore medical services online.

Statement on Copyright