

**BROCK UNIVERSITY**  
**Political Science 4P21/5P21**  
**The Global Political Economy**  
**Winter 2017**

**Lecture time and location**

Tuesdays, 2-5 pm  
MCD 404

**Instructor**

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**Course description**

Digital technologies and changing attitudes toward surveillance and the commodification of knowledge has made the control of knowledge an increasingly central aspect of the exercise of power and wealth creation in the global political economy. In this seminar, we will examine the theoretical underpinnings of what Susan Strange calls the “knowledge structure,” and how the control of knowledge is increasingly shaping our lives.

This course will be based primarily around the discussion of key texts that focus on specific parts of the global knowledge economy. The required texts, which can be found in the bookstore and online, are:

Peter Drahos and John Braithwaite. *Information Feudalism*. Sterling: Earthscan, 2002.

Available free as a pdf download:

<https://www.anu.edu.au/fellows/pdrahos/books/Information%20Feudalism.pdf>

Nick Srnicek. *Platform Capitalism*. New York: Polity, 2017.

Shawn M. Powers and Michael Jablonski, *The Real Cyber War: The Political Economy of Internet Freedom*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015.

Natasha Tusikov, *Chokepoints: Global Private Regulation on the Internet*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2016.

### Basic organization of the course

Each week includes a list of required readings. As this is a 4<sup>th</sup> year/graduate seminar, all students are expected to complete the required readings before class and to participate in class discussions.

### Late assignment policy and notes for written assignments.

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated in this outline. Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of **four percent per day**. Assignments later than two weeks will not be accepted and will receive a zero.

All research assignments must adhere to MLA or Chicago style, in-text citation. All written assignments will be marked with attention to style, grammar, and spelling.

### Course grade components

#### Undergraduate students

Seminar participation	15%
Reading reflections	15%
Take-home exam ( <b>Handed out March 27</b> )	20%
Class presentation	15%
Mini-conference:	
Abstract and annotated bibliography ( <b>Due February 13</b> )	5%
Research essay ( <b>Due March 27</b> )	25%
Mini-conference paper presentation ( <b>April 3</b> )	5%

#### Graduate students

Seminar participation	15%
Critical book review ( <b>Due date TBD</b> )	15%
Reading reflections	15%
Take-home exam ( <b>Handed out March 27</b> )	20%
Mini-conference:	
Abstract and annotated bibliography ( <b>Due February 13</b> )	5%
Major research essay ( <b>Due March 27</b> )	25%
Mini-conference paper presentation ( <b>April 3</b> )	5%

### Seminar attendance and participation (15%)

As this is a fourth-year/graduate seminar, active and informed classroom participation is essential, and attendance is mandatory. Your responsibilities as a member of the class are to:

- Complete the required readings every week before each class in order to be able to participate actively in the discussion.
- Participate actively during class discussions.

You will be assessed on the basis of the quality rather than the quantity of your contributions. A quality contribution is one that demonstrates knowledge of the course readings, engages critically with course themes and is respectful of the perspectives of others in the class. When preparing for the week's seminar, consider the following questions:

- What are the main points being made in the readings?
- What evidence, theories and methods do the authors use to support their arguments?
- How do the readings relate to each other, to other readings we've done, and to your understanding of how the world works?
- Is the author convincing on these points? Why or why not?

### **Reading reflections (15%; 5% each)**

Students will be required to prepare three brief reflections on a week's required readings. These assignments are intended to be brief (don't spend more than 15-20 minutes on them, although please spell-check them, and write in full sentences, not point-form) and should be used to help you prepare to discuss the readings for the week. **Reflections must include one question for class discussion.**

Questions to cover in your reflections: Did you agree or disagree with any of the readings? What were the most interesting/important/compelling points raised? Did you notice a general theme in the readings?

Reflections must be **emailed to the instructor by 6 pm the day before the seminar**. Students must sign up for the weeks for which they will prepare their reflections. You must submit at least one analysis before the halfway point of the course, and one after.

### **In-class presentations (4P21 only; 15%)**

Beginning in Week 3, 4P21 students will be responsible for preparing a seminar presentation of approximately 10-15 minutes, raising critical issues and initiating a class discussion. Depending on enrolment, there will typically be two presenters per class; you are encouraged to work in pairs or to coordinate to ensure that your presentations complement each other. Presentation dates will be arranged in week 2. Students **may not** present on the same week for which they are submitting a reading reflection.

Presentations have two parts:

- a one-page summary to be distributed to the class, along with two questions for discussion.
- A verbal presentation that is **not** based on the summary. The presentations **should not** be a summary of the week's readings; assume that everyone in the class has already read them

and are able to get straight to the discussion. ***Presentations that only summarize the readings will be penalized.*** In your presentations, highlight the following:

- The overarching themes linking the readings, and how they relate to the week's subject and the broader themes covered in the course.
- Points of tension and intersection among the readings, and among the other readings discussed in the course.
- Structure your presentation as if you're teaching the material, not just summarizing it.

### **Critical book review (5P21 only; 15%)**

***Due date to be selected in discussion with the instructor***

Graduate students must write an extended book review of between 3,000-4,000 words of one of the books covered in this course.

The first section of the essay (which can be no more than one third of the total length of the essay) must describe the central argument of the book. The rest of the essay must evaluate the book's arguments in the context of the readings and discussions of the course. Essays must make reference to as many relevant course readings as possible.

### **Take-home exam (15%)**

***Handed out March 27, Due: March 29***

Students will have 48 hours to complete a take-home exam based on the material covered in class.

### **In-class mini-conference**

**Note: The exact structure of this assignment may change depending on the final class size.**

Presentations of papers at academic conferences are a major way that academics present and share the latest research. During the final class we will be holding our own mini political economy conference at which students will present the findings from their major research essay. Students will be placed on panels and will get a chance to be presenters and audience members. You will be graded on this in the following way:

### **Paper abstract and annotated bibliography (5%)**

***Due: February 13***

In order to present a paper at a conference, academics must first submit an abstract summarizing their paper. These are usually written before the actual paper and often serve as a way to help organize one's thoughts about the eventual paper's structure and argument. Conference organizers either accept or reject the proposal based on this summary.

For this assignment, you will write a 250-word (maximum) abstract that summarizes the subject

under discussion (what are you discussing, why is it important), your main argument (“This paper argues that...”) and highlights what evidence you are going to draw upon. You will also be required to produce a five-to-six page annotated bibliography. The bibliography must contain at least **five** quality sources (journal articles or chapters in academic books). The instructor will then provide you with feedback. Your final essay may change from the essay proposal based on the feedback you receive, the ideas you develop, and further sources that you consult. Based on the abstracts, the instructor will group the papers together into panels, which will also contain a discussant (see below).

### **Research essay (25%)**

***One-page summary, and draft paper deadline: March 27 (one week before final class)***

***Final paper deadline: April 10 (one week after final class)***

This is the paper that you will present at the mini-conference. The essay is to be between 15 and 20 pages and on a topic related to the subjects covered in the course. It will be evaluated according to argument, organization, style and depth of research. A high-quality essay will be strong in all four areas. It should develop the ideas and themes you identified in your essay proposal. The essay must contain at least **seven** academic sources, which should be cited following a standard academic citation style (Chicago, APA, etc.). You will be encouraged to speak with the instructor and your classmates throughout the semester to develop your ideas.

Academics present papers at conferences in order to get feedback on their work. In well-run conferences, academics usually submit their papers early so that a **discussant** can read them over and provide the presenters with detailed feedback. In order to replicate this condition as closely as possible, one week before the mini-conference (March 27), students will submit a one-page summary to the instructor, who will use these summaries to form the basis of questions to be asked at the mini-conference. Draft papers must also be submitted at this time, although they will not be graded.

### **Mini-conference**

***April 3***

At the conference, students will have the chance to present papers and act as audience members.

The panels will be set by the instructor.

### **Paper presentation (5%)**

Students will have **seven** minutes to present their paper – its argument, evidence, findings and why these are important. Students may use visual aids such as PowerPoint if desired. Students **should not** read their paper, but rather present it in an engaging way. Grades will be based on the student’s ability to communicate the main points of their paper in a concise, precise and appealing way. Each panel will be followed by a question-and-answer period, and a break. Conferences are designed to be interactive, a chance for researchers to engage in dialogue. One of the ways we do so is by asking questions of panel presenters. While listening to the presenters, audience members should come up with 1-2 questions each on the papers being discussed.

## Course outline

**Note: Brief, relevant readings may be added over the course of the semester**

### 1. Introduction

**January 9**

*What is knowledge?*

Murray White, “Art so sacred, we’re not allowed to show it to you,” *Toronto Star*, November 18, 2017. <https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/visualarts/2017/11/18/art-so-sacred-were-not-allowed-to-show-it-to-you.html>.

CBC News, “Open letter accuses non-Indigenous artist of cultural appropriation. CBC.ca, December 8, 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/newman-coleman-artists-open-letter-indigenous-appropriation-1.4437958>.

Handout, “What is knowledge?”

### 2. Theorizing the knowledge structure

*What are the economic and political implications of the rising importance of knowledge regulation?*

**January 16**

Blayne Haggart, “Incorporating the study of knowledge into the IPE mainstream, or, when does a trade agreement stop being a trade agreement?” *Journal of Information Policy* 7 (2017): 176-203.

Blayne Haggart, “New economic models, new forms of state: The emergence of the “info-imperium” state, *Kritika*, forthcoming.

Christopher May, “Strange fruit: Susan Strange’s theory of structural power in the international political economy,” *Global Society* 10, no. 2 (1996): 167-189.

### 3. *Information Feudalism I: (Controlling) Knowledge is power*

*What does it mean to control knowledge? Who benefits from this control?*

**January 23**

*Information Feudalism*, Chapters 1-4.

**4. Information Feudalism II: The political economy of information feudalism**

*What are the key international institutions of the knowledge structure as it relates to intellectual property rights? Who do they benefit?*

**January 30**

*Information Feudalism*, Chapters 5-9.

World Trade Organization, “Overview: The TRIPS Agreement.”

[https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/trips\\_e/intel2\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/intel2_e.htm)

**5. Information Feudalism III: What’s at stake**

*What are the consequences of “information feudalism”? What policy responses are possible?*

**February 6**

*Information Feudalism*, Chapters 10-14.

**In-class debate: Has intellectual property outlived its usefulness?**

**6. The Real Cyber War I: The information-industrial complex**

*What are the geopolitics of the Internet?*

**February 13**

*The Real Cyber War*, Introduction-Chapter 2.

**February 20**

**Reading week, no classes**

**7. The Real Cyber War II: Surveillance and power**

*Who governs? Whose ideas rule? In whose interest?*

**February 27**

*The Real Cyber War*, Chapters 3-5.

**8. The Real Cyber War III: “Internet freedom” reconsidered**

*How should we reconcile surveillance with the need for anonymity and privacy?*

**March 6**

*The Real Cyber War*, Chapters 6-Conclusion.

Blayne Haggart, and Michael Jablonski. “Contradictory Hypocrisy or Complementary Policies? The Internet Freedom Initiative, US copyright maximalism and the exercise of US structural power in the digital age.” *The Information Society* 33, 3 (2017): 1-16.

**In-class debate: Should Canada restrict cross-border data and information flows?**

**9. *Platform Capitalism*: It's data, not production, that matters**

*What is platform capitalism? How is the desire to control knowledge reshaping the global economy?*

**March 13**

**NOTE: May be held at a different time, TBC.**

**Special presentation: In-class discussion between Prof. Leah Bradshaw and Prof. Haggart**

To be followed by class discussion.

*Platform Capitalism*, whole book, especially pp. 37-129.

**10. *Chokepoints I*: Who are the regulators?**

*Who is responsible for setting the online rules that affect billions worldwide?*

**Guest Lecturer: Dr. Natasha Tusikov**

**March 20**

*Chokepoints*, Chapters 1-3

**11. *Chokepoints II*: What is to be done?**

*Who benefits from global online private regulation? What challenges does it pose? What can, or should, be done?*

**March 27**

*Chokepoints*, Chapters 4, 6-7

**In-class debate: Should internet intermediaries should regulate third-party online activity?**

**12. Mini-conference**

**April 3**

## Academic Policies

### Statement on academic misconduct

Because academic integrity is vital to the well-being of the university community, Brock

University takes academic misconduct very seriously. Academic misconduct includes plagiarism, which involves presenting the words and ideas of another person as if they were your own, and other forms of cheating, such as using crib notes during a test or fabricating data for a lab assignment.

The penalties for academic misconduct are severe. A grade of zero will be given for any assignment involving academic misconduct in this course. A second offense may result in suspension from the University. Students are urged to read the section of the Brock University Undergraduate Calendar that pertains to academic misconduct.

Instruction on identifying and avoiding academic misconduct will be provided in this course. In addition, students are reminded that the Student Development Centre (Schmon Tower, Room 400) offers free workshops on writing and study skills and on avoiding plagiarism. Students are also encouraged to take advantage of the following resources to help them understand and avoid academic misconduct:

- An instructional sheet on how to avoid plagiarism (available at: <http://www.brocku.ca/academic-integrity/undergraduate-students/how-to-avoid-plagiarism>)
- A video on academic integrity (available at: <https://www.brocku.ca/academic-integrity/video-download>)
- An online academic integrity tutorial (available at: <http://www.brocku.ca/academic-integrity/academic-integrity-tutorial>)

The standards and norms regarding some of this material may differ across disciplines. It is your responsibility to ask your teaching assistant or professor for clarification if needed. **Ignorance is NOT an acceptable excuse for academic misconduct.**

### **Policy on late essays**

Essays received by the instructor or deposited in the Political Science department essay drop box after 4:00 PM of the date on which they were due will be penalized at a rate of **FOUR percent each day late. No paper will be accepted two weeks after the due date.**

An essay is considered received when the **original hard copy** (printed, not digital) of the paper is in the hands of the instructor or in the box outside the Political Science Department's office. (ALL ESSAYS MUST INCLUDE A TITLE PAGE WITH THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION CLEARLY MARKED: STUDENT NUMBER, TA and INSTRUCTOR'S NAME, COURSE NAME and NUMBER). Having an essay date-stamped by security, or the library, or anyone else does not constitute receipt of the essay by the Political Science Department.

Extensions of due dates are granted only in circumstances that are beyond the student's control, such as health problems that are supported by a medical certificate or other, clearly equivalent,

situations. Time management problems are not grounds for extensions. You are strongly urged to avoid these penalties by beginning to work on essays early in the term; by setting your own target dates for completion that are several days before the due date; and by carefully budgeting your time.

### **Policy on returning marked essays**

Marked essays will normally be returned during class meetings or at the final examination. Students who are not in class to receive their essays or do not receive them at the final examination can obtain them in two ways: 1) directly from the instructor during his/her office hours (unless the instructor specifies in the course outline or by notice on his/her office door that this option is not available), and/or 2) directly from the instructor on specific days and at specific times announced in class or posted on his/her office door. Essays that are not picked up within six months after the end of term will be shredded.

### **Academic Integrity:**

#### Statement for undergraduate courses

Academic misconduct is a serious offence. The principle of academic integrity, particularly of doing one's own work, documenting properly (including use of quotation marks, appropriate paraphrasing and referencing/citation), collaborating appropriately, and avoiding misrepresentation, is a core principle in university study. Students should consult Section VII, "Academic Misconduct", in the "Academic Regulations and University Policies" entry in the Undergraduate Calendar, available at <http://brocku.ca/webcal> to view a fuller description of prohibited actions, and the procedures and penalties.

This course will use Turnitin.com, phrase-matching software. If you object to uploading your assignments to Turnitin.com for any reason, please notify the instructor to discuss alternative submissions.

### **Intellectual Property Notice:**

All slides, presentations, handouts, tests, exams, and other course materials created by the instructor in this course are the intellectual property of the instructor. A student who publicly posts or sells an instructor's work, without the instructor's express consent, may be charged with misconduct under Brock's Academic Integrity Policy and/or Code of Conduct, and may also face adverse legal consequences for infringement of intellectual property rights.

### **Academic Accommodation:**

As part of Brock University's commitment to a respectful work and learning environment, the University will make every reasonable effort to accommodate all members of the university community with disabilities. If you require academic accommodations related to a documented disability to participate in this course, you are encouraged to contact Services for Students with Disabilities in the Student Development Centre (4th floor Schmon Tower, ex. 3240). You are also

encouraged to discuss any accommodations with the instructor well in advance of due dates and scheduled assessments.

**Academic Accommodation due to Religious Obligations:**

Brock University acknowledges the pluralistic nature of the undergraduate and graduate communities such that accommodations will be made for students who, by reason of religious obligation, must miss an examination, test, assignment deadline, laboratory or other compulsory academic event. Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious obligation should make a formal, written request to their instructor(s) for alternative dates and/or means of satisfying requirements.

**Medical Exemption Policy:**

The University requires that a student be medically examined in Health Services, or by an off-campus physician prior to an absence due to medical reasons from an exam, lab, test, quiz, seminar, assignment, etc. The Medical Certificate can be found at: <http://www.brocku.ca/health-services/policies/exemption>