

## GINS 4090D Internet and Platforms in Global Contexts

Thursday 11:35-14:25

Online Delivery: blended model of asynchronous and synchronous sessions

*It is the responsibility of all students to follow the University's policy and guidance about COVID-19.  
Please visit Carleton's COVID-19 page for the latest updates: <https://carleton.ca/covid19/>*

**Instructor and Contact:** Xiaofei Han (xiaofeihan@cunet.carleton.ca)

**Office hours:** via Zoom, Mondays 8-10 am & by appointment. Zoom link provided on Brightspace.

### Course Description and Objective

How has the internet become the way it is today and how will it evolve in the future? Platform has literally become a buzz word in the past several years, but what is a “platform” exactly? How have platform technologies played out in different localities and what are the social implications that platforms entail? This course provides an overview of the key historical and contemporary issues around the economics and politics of the internet and platforms in global contexts. During this semester, we will critically engage with topics such as the technical constructs of network technologies, key debates and the power interplay between different regions and countries in global internet governance and policies, the dominant business models for global platforms, economics and governance of (big)data, and platform cultural politics at both local and transnational levels. This course aims to cultivate students’ critical thinking about their daily encounters with the internet and platforms as users, consumers, and citizens as well as the global impacts of such encounters through the theoretical lens and analytical tools provided.

### Course Format

This course will be delivered online. A blended model is adopted for the online delivery. There will be asynchronous content uploaded every week to Brightspace course page and scheduled synchronous sessions in selected weeks via Zoom (please see the schedule for details).

### Course materials

Readings are available through the Ares reserve on Brightspace via the sources subscribed to by the MacOdrum Library. Otherwise, links are provided in the syllabus and on Brightspace page.

### Evaluation

Assignment	Value	Due Date
Synthesis Paper	25%	Signed up in the first week
Discussion Forums (3 for the term at 5% each)	15%	Jan. 27, Feb.17 and Mar.3
Platform Value Chain Tracking Project	25%	March 31
Final Paper	35%	April 18
*Bonus Mark	5%	On-going

### *Synthesis Paper (25% )*

You will write an 800-1000 words synthesis paper to articulate arguments and key facts in different readings for one particular week between week 2 and week 11. In the first week, I will circulate a sign-up sheet for you to select your preferred weekly theme. Ideally there are up to three students each week and it is on first-served basis. You can choose the week that best fits your interest and/or schedule. The synthesis paper is due at Wednesday midnight of your selected week. More details regarding how to write a good synthesis paper will be provided in the workshop in the first week.

### *Discussion Forums (5%\*3)*

Students are expected to engage with online discussion for three weeks (Jan. 27, Feb. 17 & Mar. 3). You need to post a short discussion (150-250 words) about the week's readings and video lectures on the weekly forum set up on Brightspace. You are also welcome to share a news/event/real-life example relevant to the weekly theme. Your discussions must build on the analyses provided in the weekly readings and video lectures and focus on one or two specific concepts/arguments/key facts.

You are encouraged to engage with your classmates who post earlier. You have a full week to post since our class (e.g. for the discussion for the week of Jan.27, you have a full week to post until the class on Feb.3). The key of the online discussions is to show that you have done the readings and video lectures and to share your understanding and opinions about the key issues covered in that week, instead of just sharing your own opinions.

### *Platform Value Chain Tracking Project (25% = 15% for group report & 10% for presentation)*

This is a group project. After the reading week, students will work in groups of 4-5 and each group will select a product/service related to a platform to analyze. I will divide students into groups randomly. You can also team up with the people you want to work with. If you wish to do so, you must send me the group list before the reading week (Feb.18). The group list will be finalized by March 3 and posted on Brightspace. There are two parts of this project. Firstly, each group will need to submit an 600-900 words group report before the class in week 12, summarizing their key findings. Secondly, each group will deliver a 10-12 minutes presentation with slides during the synchronous session in week 12 and share their findings with the whole class.

Students will work together to track and deconstruct the global value chain(s) of a particular technological product or platform service, such as an iPhone, online shopping service on Amazon/Taobao, or Uber service, etc. Each group will focus on one single product/service after consulting with the instructor. Students will map out the major production and distribution stages of this product/service, main actors and labor involved, coordination and logistics of key resources (e.g. raw materials, data, etc.), relevant regulations and policies that overwatch the value chains, key technologies employed, cultural politics and ideologies reflected in such

practices, and so on. Student will also need to relate their analysis back to at least two key themes/debates/concepts discussed throughout the term in class. More details about the group project will be provided in the workshop in week 9.

### *Final Paper (35%)*

Students will write a 1800-2400 words research paper. Your potential topics can be one of the followings:

1. History of the internet and its regional development in a particular country/region;
2. Technical layers of the internet and different “bottle necks” for internet governance and control, with specific example(s);
3. A critical analysis of the current global governance framework (key institutions, regulations, standards, etc.) of the internet and the pros and cons of “multi-stakeholder model” from the perspective of the developed and/or developing countries/regions;
4. The myth of internet freedom (pick one specific factor/element/issue or country/region to analyze);
5. Platform economies and platformized labor, with specific examples;
6. Business model(s) of a particular platform and what challenges it imposes on the societies, with specific examples;
7. Platform’s data practices and user privacy, with specific example(s);
8. Transnational data flow, data localization, and competition for digital sovereignty, with a focus on one or between two specific countries/regions;
9. Regional developments and impacts of platform capitalism, with focus on specific examples and localities;
10. Other topics related to the course theme that is checked with the instructor (if you want to select your own topic, please send it to me no later than April 1).

You need to draw on at least three course readings and at least two external, quality academic sources for your final paper. Your final paper must show a thorough understanding of your selected topic and extend the analyses provided in course materials. A strong final paper is a combination of demonstrated good command of the key concepts and texts from the course, concrete analysis of specific examples, a critical perspective into the issues you focus on, and a concise and coherent writing style. More details will be provided in the workshop in week 13.

### *Bonus Marks (5%)*

At the end of term, up to 5% bonus marks will be given to students who finish online content in time and who actively participate into online discussion and during synchronous sessions. (If all students do an excellent job, I don't mind giving bonus marks to all of you ;)

### **Format and Style**

- All assignments (except for the forum posts) for this course must follow such formatting:

- 1-inch margin, size 12, a common legible font, and paginated;
- Word counts for all assignments exclude title page and reference list;
- APA style for all assignments. Please make sure you also include in-text citations and/or links for external sources for forum posts whereas applicable

## Schedules

(Please note that I may make changes to the schedules and readings during the semester. Any changes will be communicated via email and Brightspace course page in advance.)

### ---- Section I. Network ----

#### **Week 1 (Jan. 13) Introduction **\*\*synchronous session—11:35--13:00\*\*****

Explore the history of the internet:

<https://www.internethalloffame.org/internet-history/timeline>

**\*\*Workshop 1: greeting, synthesis paper, and signing up for weekly themes\*\***

#### **Week 2 (Jan. 20) Understand network**

Winner, L. (1980). Do artifacts have politics? In *Daedalus*, 109(1), pp. 121-136.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/20024652.pdf>

Lessig, L. (2006). Chapter 3 Is-Ism: Is the way it is the way it must be? In *Code 2.0*. Basic Book.

P.31-38. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Code\\_v2.pdf](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Code_v2.pdf)

#### **Week 3 (Jan. 27) History, states, and institutions for internet governance at a global scale**

Powers, S. M. & Jablonski, M. (2015). Introduction and Chapter 1 in *The Real Cyber War*.

#### **Week 4 (Feb. 3) Access and global internet resource**

Scott, B., Heumann, S. & Kleinhans, J. P. (2015). *Landmark EU and US Net Neutrality Decisions*.

Waterloo, ON: CIGI and Chatham House (12pp).

<https://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/no18.pdf>

Napoli, P. M. & Obar, A. J. (2014). The emerging mobile internet underclass: A critique of mobile internet access. *The Information Society*, 30(5), 323-334. DOI:

10.1080/01972243.2014.944726

Check the global internet traffic map: <https://global-internet-map-2021.telegeography.com/>

Check the global submarine cable map: <https://submarine-cable-map-2020.telegeography.com/>

#### **Week 5 (Feb. 10) Approach in global internet governance: multi-stakeholder vs multi-lateral**

Powers, S. M. & Jablonski, M. (2015). Chapter 5 The Myth of Multistakeholder Governance. In *The Real Cyber War*.

Shen, H (2016). China and global internet governance: toward an alternative analytical framework. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 9(3), 304-324.

#### Supplemental Reading:

Holden, K. & Van Klyton, A. (2016). Exploring the tensions and incongruities of internet governance in Africa. *Government Information Quarterly*, 33(4), 736-745.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2016.08.006>

### **Week 6 (Feb. 17) “internet freedom”**

Balkin, J. M. (2009). The future of free expression in digital age. *Pepperdine Law Review*, 36(2), 427-444.

Reventlow, N.J. & McCully, J. (2018). *Internet Freedom Without Imperialism: Response to Jack Goldsmith’s “the Failure of Internet Freedom”*. (a short column).

<https://knightcolumbia.org/content/internet-freedom-without-imperialism>.

Han, R. (2018). Introduction: Pluralism and Cyberpolitics in China. In *Contesting Cyberspace in China: Online Expression and Authoritarian Resilience*, pp. 1–22. Columbia University Press.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/han-18474.4>

#### Supplemental Reading:

Deibert, Ronald and Rafal Rohozinski. (2010). Chapter 1 Beyond Denial. In Ronald Deibert et al. (eds). *Access Controlled: The Shaping of Power, Rights, and Rule in Cyberspace*, pp. 3-14.

Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press <http://www.access-controlled.net/wp-content/PDFs/chapter-1.pdf>

### **Week 7 (Feb. 24) Reading Break: No class & Enjoy**

---- Section II. Platform ----

### **Week 8 (Mar. 3) “Platform capitalism” I: business models**

(or “what’s wrong with platforms and why is it necessary to put them on leash?”)

Zuboff, Shoshana. (2019). Chapter 3 The Discovery of Behavioral Surplus. In *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, p.63-97. New York: Public Affairs.

Gorwa, R. (2019). What is platform governance? In *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(6), 854-871. DOI: 10.1080/1369118X.2019.1573914.

Levine, Y. (2018). The Cambridge Analytica Con: How media coverage misses the mark on the Trump data scam. *The Blaffler*. <https://theblaffler.com/latest/cambridge-analytica-con-levine>

\*Group List Finalized and Posted on Brightspace

### **Week 9 (Mar. 10). “Platform capitalism” II: global value chains and invisible labor**

**\*\*synchronous workshop—11:35-12:25\*\***

Gray, M. L. & Suri, S. (2019). Introduction: Ghosts in the Machine. In *Ghost Work: How to Stop Silicon Valley from Building a New Global Underclass*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Available online via the catalogue of Carleton Library.

Kelly, A. (2019, December 16). Apple and Google named in US lawsuit over Congolese child cobalt mining deaths. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/global->

[development/2019/dec/16/apple-and-google-named-in-us-lawsuit-over-congolese-child-cobalt-mining-deaths](#)

**\*\*Workshop 2: group project\*\***

**Week 10 (Mar. 17) “Platform capitalism” III: practices and politics in non-Western contexts**

Zhang, L. (2020). When Platform Capitalism Meets Petty Capitalism in China: Alibaba and an Integrated Approach to Platformization. *International Journal of Communication*, 14, 114-134. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/download/10935/2900>

GIGA (2019). Digital Platforms in Africa: The “Uberisation” of Informal Work. *GIGA Focus Afrika*. German Institute for Global and Area Studies. ISSN: 1862-3603. <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/12318599-digital-platforms-africa-uberisation-informal-work/>

Hou, J. (2021). A platform for underclass youth: Hanmai rap videos, social class, and surveillance on Chinese social media. In *First Monday*, 26(9). <https://dx.doi.org/10.5210/fm.v26i9.10587>

**Guest Lecture by Jiaxi Hou, the University of Tokyo: Platforms and underclass in East Asia (TBD)**

**Week 11 (Mar. 24) “It’s all about data”: of individuals, of states**

van Dijck, J. (2014). Datafication, dataism and dataveillance: Big data between scientific paradigm and ideology. *Surveillance & Society*, 12(2), 197-208.

Cartwright, M. (2020). Internationalising state power through the internet: Google, Huawei and geopolitical struggle. *Internet Policy Review*, 9(3). <https://doi.org/10.14763/2020.3.1494>

Go through Facebook’s Data Policy and check out what users have “consented” to: <https://www.facebook.com/policy.php/>

**Supplemental Reading:**

Cyphers & Gebhart. (2019). *Behind the One-Way Mirror: A Deep Dive Into the Technology of Corporate Surveillance*. Electronic Frontier Foundation. <https://www.eff.org/wp/behind-the-one-way-mirror>

**Week 12 (Mar. 31) Group Presentations **\*\*synchronous session—11:35-14:25\*\*****

**\*\*Group Presentations & Group Report due before class\*\***

**Week 13 (Apr. 7) Final Paper Workshop **\*\*synchronous session—11:35-12:25\*\*****

**\*\*Workshop 3: final paper\*\***

**Apr.18 Final Paper Due at 23:59**

---- End of Term ----

## Submission and Return of Term Work

All assignments will be submitted electronically through Brightspace assignment portals. The detailed requirements and supplemental information will be posted on Brightspace course page and discussed in our synchronous workshops. You are also welcome to send me emails or drop by during the virtual office hours via zoom link if you have any questions.

Assignments will be graded and feedbacks returned via Brightspace. Assignments will be returned within maximum two weeks after the submission. No feedbacks will be provided to forum posts, yet I will jump in on the online forum discussion where I see suitable. Grades of final paper, forum posts, and bonus marks will be accessed/posted after the end of term in late April.

## Grading

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. Final standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points is:

Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale	Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale
90-100	A+	12	67-69	C+	6
85-89	A	11	63-66	C	5
80-84	A-	10	60-62	C-	4
77-79	B+	9	57-59	D+	3
73-76	B	8	53-56	D	2
70-72	B-	7	50-52	D-	1

Approval of final grades: Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by an instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

## Carleton E-mail Accounts

Please use your Carleton University e-mail accounts for all emails related to this class with course code in the subject line. All email communication to students from this course will be via official Carleton University e-mail accounts.

## Declining Online Imaging and Recording Statement

This course may include classes or sessions that use video conferencing platforms, such as Zoom, MS Teams and BigBlueButton. This raises some important privacy considerations that all students should know. You are not required to turn your camera on and may decide to turn it on

or off at any time. Students are not permitted to take photographs, screenshots, or record other students, TAs, or instructors unless they obtain explicit permission from the professor and all other students well in advance of the session.

Some classes or sessions may be recorded by the instructor to facilitate learning for those who cannot attend or those who wish to review course material after class has ended. If you do not wish to be recorded during these classes or sessions, please let your instructor know, and they will contact you to discuss alternate arrangements.

### **Posting Course Materials on Course-Sharing Websites and Social Media**

Teaching materials and learning activities created for this course, including presentations, posted notes, recorded sessions and videos, forum posts, assignments and exams, etc. by both the instructor and students, remain the intellectual property of the author(s) and are copy protected. Students registered in this course may take notes and make copies of course materials for their own educational use only. Students are not permitted to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly without prior written consent of the author(s).

### **Statement on Student Conduct**

As part of a learning community, it is our responsibility to contribute to an engaging, inclusive, and safe learning environment. During all class-related activities, please engage in respectful and courteous communication, follow the [Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#), and avoid discrimination and Harassment. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated in this class.

Do not cut and paste, screen shot, share course content, or post the words of your classmates, TA, or Instructor outside of class without permission. All work submitted in this course must be uniquely your own. When submitting assignments and/or completing exams, you are expected to articulate responses in your own words rather than cutting and pasting from course materials without permission, which is a form of plagiarism.

### **Statement on Plagiarism**

Please be careful to avoid plagiarism and other Academic Integrity violations. The Carleton University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas, or work of others as one’s own”. You can find more details here: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/wp-content/uploads/Academic-Integrity-policy-June-2021.pdf>

### **Requests for Academic Accommodation**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows.

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the EIC's website: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the EIC's website: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The *Paul Menton Centre* for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your *Letter of Accommodation* at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*) at <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>

You can visit the EIC's website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

### **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: [carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support](https://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support)

### **Accommodation for Student Activities**

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

### **Student Supports**

There are many supports for student across campus. Please see below for supports that might be helpful for you.

The Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): Need support with your learning goals? CSAS may be able to help. Visit CSAS on the 4th floor of MacOdrum Library or online at [carleton.ca/csas](https://carleton.ca/csas). CSAS offers academic assistance with:

- course content
- academic writing
- skills development

Carleton Health and Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>

International Students Support Office (ISSO): <https://carleton.ca/isso/>

Centre for Indigenous Initiatives: <https://carleton.ca/indigenous/students/>

Ojigkwanong Indigenous Student Centre: <https://carleton.ca/indigenous/students/ojigkwanong-indigenous-student-centre/>