

Control and Resistance in the Digital Era

An Introduction to key issues and debates

Institut für Kommunikationswissenschaften (IfKW),
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU)

Course responsible:

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Level: Bachelor

ECTS: 3

Language: English

Time and date:

SS 2020: June 8 & 10 (09:00 - 14:00 and 18:00 - 20:00) and June 12 & 13 (09:00 - 17:00)

Exam form:

Project essay about subject chosen by student (max. 4.000 words incl. references). Theme must be accepted by course responsible and has to be relevant for content of the course.

Project essays due:

July 1, 2020

Lecture plan and syllabus:

Summary:

The interdisciplinary course introduces critical approaches to the contemporary Internet. Drawing upon the work by Michel Foucault and literature on the political economy of media, we explain such phenomena as power and control in distributed networks, the nature of exploitation and oppression in digital domains, corporate and state surveillance, commodification of identities, or the increasing ecological footprint of allegedly green network technologies. Subsequently, these aspects are contrasted with contemporary practices of resistance and re-appropriation aiming at a progressive and collaborative approach to technology.

The course consists of a mixture of teacher-driven lectures and student-focused seminars. It is expected that participants have made themselves familiar with the readings prior to course start. Every student will have to choose one text and briefly summarize it in a seminar. A list of available texts can be found in the course plan below.

The exam consists of a written essay of approx. 4000 words over a topic chosen by the students. An outline of the planned essays will have to be presented in class.

MONDAY, JUNE 8:

09:00 s.t. - 09:30

Welcome and introduction to the course

We get to know each other and gain an overview over content of the course, work requirements, exams etc.

09:30 - 11:00

Lecture 1: CONTROL

How Control Exists After De-Centralization: The History, Institutions, and Technologies Behind the Contemporary Internet (HP)

The lecture explores the structures, institutions, and technologies forming the contemporary Internet. Offering a historical vantage point, multiple vectors of emergence of digital networks are studied and connected to questions of power and control. At a theoretical level, the lecture offers a concrete exemplification Foucault's genealogical method and critically deploys his varied understandings of power to enable a better grasp of the political, social, and economic implications of today's most dominant technologies.

Required readings:

- Abbate, Janet. 2017. What and Where is the Internet? (Re)Defining Internet Histories. *Internet Histories: Digital Technology, Culture & Society* 1(1-2), 8-14.
- Foucault, Michel. 2007. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-78*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. (chapter 1, pp. 1-12)

Recommended readings:

- Galloway, Alexander. 2004. *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization*. Cambridge: MIT Press. (chapter I.1 Physical Media, pp. 29-53)
- Foucault, Michel. 2004. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-76*. London: Penguin Books. (chapter 11, pp. 239-256)

11:00 - 12:00: Lunch

12:00 s.t. - 13:45

Lecture 2: WORK & EXPLOITATION

The Power of Platforms and Networks: New Forms of Accumulation, Commodification, and Labour in Digital Capitalism (KS)

This lecture deals with new forms of work, accumulation and commodification in digital capitalism and how these are mediated via platforms. Taking concrete examples such as Uber, AirBnB, or Amazon Mechanical Turk as departure point, the lecture offers an empirically grounded exploration of the contemporary, globally networked work 'place'.

Required readings:

Smicek, Nick. 2017. *Platform Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, Chapter 2.

Recommended readings:

Scholz, Trebor. 2017. *Uberworked and Underpaid: How Workers Are Disrupting the Digital Economy*. Cambridge: Polity Press, Chapter 7.

Fuchs, Christian. 2012. Google Capitalism. *TripleC*. 10(1), 42-48.

Meschede, Laura. 2018. Die Mensch-Maschine. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 23 March. <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/leben/arbeit-bei-onlineportal-die-mensch-maschine-1.3911727?reduced=true> (in German)

13:45 - 14:00: A few words about the next days and distribution of articles for student presentations

Break

18:00 - 20:00:

Seminar 1: Film screening (HP)

Laura Poitras *Citizenfour* (2014). With brief introduction and followed by q/a.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10:

09:00 s.t. - 10:30:

Lecture 3: SUSTAINABILITY

Utopia, Myopia, Dystopia: Digital Dreams, Ideology, and the Corporate/State Takeover of the Internet (HP)

This lecture takes up issues of ideology in thinking about digital technologies. Continuing with themes highlighted in lecture 2 and reconnecting to the theoretical frames of lecture 1, we critique corporate and political new-speak about alleged potentials of the Internet and new learning algorithms in terms of economic opportunities, political liberation, and a greening of the economy. We will focus specifically on the carbon footprint of cloud-computing, the problem of identity, profiling, and commodification in corporate 'social' media, and questions of a political economy of fake news and propaganda in digital domains.

Required readings:

- Barlow, John Perry. 1996. A Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace. *Eff.org*, (February 8). <https://www.eff.org/de/cyberspace-independence>
- Belkhir, Lotfi and Ahmed Elmeligi. 2018. Assessing ICT Global Emissions Footprint: Trends to 2040 and Recommendations. *Journal of Cleaner Production* 177: 448-463.
- Herrman, John. 2016. Inside Facebook's (Totally Insane, Unintentionally Gigantic, Hyperpartisan) Political-Media Machine. *The New York Times Magazine Online*. August 24. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/28/magazine/inside-facebooks-totally-insane-unintentionally-gigantic-hyperpartisan-political-media-machine.html>

Recommended readings:

- Bivens, Rena. 2017. The gender binary will not be deprogrammed: ten years of coding gender on Facebook. *New Media & Society* 19(6): 880-898.
- Hayles, Katherine N. 2007. Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes. *Profession* (2007):187-199.
- Pötzsch, Holger. 2018. Archives and Identity in the Context of Social Media and Algorithmic Analytics: Towards an Understanding of iArchive and Predictive Retention. *New Media & Society* 20(9), 3304-3322.

10:30 - 11:30

Lecture 4: NETWORKS

Network of Networks: A Rough-Guide to Protocols, Security, and Anonymity Online (DL)

The lecture offers an introduction to salient technical aspects of the Internet and internet-based communication. As such, it provides an important basis for an understanding of the dynamics between surveillance, control and resistance in digital domains, and prepares the grounds for practical cybersecurity practices taken up later in the course.

Required readings:

Wikipedia: The free encyclopedia. 2020. Internet. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet>

11:30 - 12:00: *Lunch*

12:00 - 14:00: *Article presentations by students I (1-2 students per article)*

12:00 - 12:30: Lanchester, John (2017) You Are the Product. *London Review of Books* 39(16): 3-10.

12:30 - 13:00: Global E-Waste Monitor. 2017. <http://ewastemonitor.info/>

13:00 - 13:30: Chinese Labour Watch. 2018. Amazon Profits from Secretly Oppressing its Supplier's Workers: An Investigative Report on Hengyang Foxconn. <http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/report/132>

13:30 - 14:00: Molleindustria. 2011. *Phonestory*. Molleindustria. (Introduce both the game and the controversy around it.)

Break

18:00 - 20:00:

Seminar 2: Film screening (KS)

Hans Block and Moritz Risewieck *The Cleaners* (2019). With brief introduction and followed by q/a.

FRIDAY, JUNE 12:

09:15 - 10:30

Lecture 5: RESISTANCE

From Global Panopticon to Pervasive Management: Resisting the Digital Surveillance and Exploitation Complex (HP)

Taking Foucault's observation that all power is productive and with necessity generates its own intrinsic forms of counter-conduct, this lecture interrogates practices of resistance to the tight exploitation, surveillance, and control regimes characteristic of contemporary digital media ecologies. Closely connecting conditions, strategies, and tactics, both on- and offline, we aim at offering alternatives and facilitate self-empowerment and collective mobilization in the face of increasing oppression and alienation in digital domains.

Required readings:

- Barassi, Veronica. 2016. Datafied Citizens? Social Media Activism, Digital Traces and the Question About Political Profiling. *Communication and the Public* 1(4): 494-499.
- Pötzsch, Holger. 2019. Critical Digital Literacy: Technology in Education beyond Issues of User Competence and Labour-Market Qualifications. *TripleC* 17(2): 221-240.
- Assange, Julian. 2015. Introduction: WikiLeaks and Empire. In: J. Assange (ed.) *The WikiLeaks Files: The World According to US Empire*. London: Verso, 1-19.

Recommended readings:

- Williams, Margot, Henrik Moltke, Micah Lee and Ryan Gallagher. 2019. Meltdown Showed Extent of NSA Surveillance - And Other Tales from Hundreds of Intelligence Documents. *The Intercept*. May 29. <https://theintercept.com/2019/05/29/nsa-sidtoday-surveillance-intelligence/>
- Harrison, Sarah. 2015. Indexing the Empire. In: Julian Assange (ed.) *The WikiLeaks Files: The World According to US Empire*. London: Verso, 145-158

10:30 - 11:30:

Seminar 3: Film screening (HP)

Konstantin Rozhkov and Artyom Somov *The Assange Story* (2020). With brief introduction and followed by q/a.

11:30 - 12:00 Lunch

12:00 - 13:45

Lecture 6: PRACTICE

CCC Cybersecurity workshop

Required readings & resources:

Lee, Micah. 2017. Cybersecurity for the People: How to Protect Your Phone at a Protest. *The Intercept*. April 21. <https://theintercept.com/2017/04/21/cybersecurity-for-the-people-how-to-protect-your-privacy-at-a-protest/> (watch movie)

RiseUp: <https://riseup.net/>

Electronic Frontiers Foundation: Surveillance Self-Defense: <https://ssd.eff.org/>

The Tor Project: <https://www.torproject.org/>

14:00 - 18:00:

Article presentations by students III (2 students per article)

- 14:00 - 14:30: Gehl, Robert W. and Julie Synder-Yuly. 2016. The Need for Social Media Alternatives. *Democratic Communiqué* 27, 78-82.
- 14:30 - 15:00: Bowles, Nellie. 2019. Silicon Valley Came to Kansas Schools. That Started a Rebellion. *The New York Times*, April 21. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/21/technology/silicon-valley-kansas-schools.html?utm_source=pocket-newtab
- 15:00 - 15:30: Brecht, Bertolt. 2000. The Radio as Communications Apparatus. In *Brecht on Film and Radio*, edited by Marc Silbermann, 41-47. New York: Bloomsbury.
- 15:30 - 16:00: Selwyn, Neil. 2016. Minding Our Language: Why Education and Technology Is Full of Bullshit... and What Might Be Done About It. *Learning, Media & Technology* 41(3): 437-443.
- 16:00 - 16:30: Matsakis, Louise. 2019. How the West Got China's Social Credit System Wrong. *Wired.com*, July 29. <https://www.wired.com/story/china-social-credit-score-system/>
- 16:30 - 17:00: Boyd, Dana and Kate Crawford. 2012. Critical Questions for Big Data. *Information, Communication & Society* 15(5): 662-679.
- 17:00 - 17:30: Curran, Dylan. 2018. Are You Ready? Here Is All the Data Facebook and Google Have on You. *The Guardian*. (March 30). <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/28/all-the-data-facebook-google-has-on-you-privacy> (Please offer practical examples.)

17:30 - 18:00: Lee, Micah. 2017. The U.S. Government Thinks Thousands of Russian Hackers May Be Reading My Blog. They Aren't. *The Intercept*. January 4. <https://theintercept.com/2017/01/04/the-u-s-government-thinks-thousands-of-russian-hackers-are-reading-my-blog-they-arent/>

SATURDAY, JUNE 13:

09:30 - 11:00

Summary, Q/A, and Project Design (HP & KS) OR Excursion?

11:00 - 12:00: Lunch

12:00 - 13:45: Student project presentations: (work requirement)

Each student will have to present a succinct outline for their planned course essay. Please provide a draft disposition and table of contents as a hand-out. Each presentation should not last longer than 10 minutes (max. 5 minutes presentation and 5 minutes q/a and feedback).

14:15 - 15:30: Student project presentations: (continued)

15:30 - 16:00: Exam preparations

You will be able to ask questions and get feedback on practical issues regarding your planned course essays.