



Technopolitics: Government & Political Systems

POL 42900
CRN: 38078
06.16 – 08.05.2025,
3 Credit Hours

Instructor Info —



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Office Hours: By appt (Zoom)



Click here to schedule



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Course Info —



Summer 2025



Asynchronous



Online

About —

This course explores the intersection of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), and political processes across countries. Students will examine the interplay between digitalization, society, and politics. This will include how technology is reshaping electoral campaigns, voter targeting, and political participation.

Teaching Philosophy

As an instructor, I am responsible for maximizing each student's opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed in reaching the outcomes I define for the course and your personal goals related to the class and your career. To achieve this, I draw on theories and practices rooted in student-centered, collaborative, and active learning principles. I focus on student learning, which develops your skills to view the world in new ways and engage in debates and discussions. I have attempted to make this course and pedagogy as transparent and collaborative as possible. If something is ever unclear, I ask that you let me know, and we can discuss it via email or during office hours. I want to help you develop interests and have what you learn be something you return to throughout your career.

Course Objectives

1. Analyze how AI is shaping political decision-making, campaign strategies, and public opinion across contexts.
2. Evaluate the ethical, social, and economic implications of AI in political systems.
3. Compare the use of AI in political campaigns and policymaking across countries.
4. Critique the influence of AI in geopolitical strategy.
5. Propose informed perspectives on the future of technopolitics.

Transferable Skills

- **Critical Thinking:** Enables analysis, effective communication, & collaboration.
- **Problem-Solving:** Allows individuals to address complex workplace issues, find innovative solutions, & improve communication skills.
- **Effective Communication:** Useful for conveying ideas & information clearly and concisely, building strong client relationships, meeting organizational goals, & resolving conflicts.
- **Collaboration:** Essential for working towards a common goal, building strong relationships with colleagues, achieving better results, & developing leadership skills.
- **Understanding Different Perspectives:** Necessary for building strong relationships with colleagues, clients, & customers, & promoting critical thinking skills & empathy.

Course Materials

Required Texts: All course texts are available for free online.

Computer Capabilities: You will need a fast, reliable internet connection as this course relies on Brightspace and Perusall. You will need a **word processor** (i.e., Microsoft Word or Google Docs), remember MS Office is free for all students. See Purdue's Student Services for resources such as Technology Help, Academic Help, and Campus Resources.

Student Success

Achieving these learning objectives requires you to work hard and challenge yourself while being open to new and difficult questions or revisiting existing beliefs and biases. To help you succeed in this course, I have dedicated a section on Brightspace under the Class Resources module. I provided resources to help improve your writing, avoid plagiarism, better your time management, etc.

If you want to be a successful student and professional:

- Be self-motivated and self-disciplined.
- Be willing to speak up if problems arise.
- Access the resources that are available to you; reaching out for assistance is a critical life skill, rather than an indication of weakness.
- Be able and willing to commit 3-5 hours per week to this course. This includes class lectures, completing the readings/videos/podcasts, course assignments, and studying.

How to Get Help: I authentically care about your success and well-being. If a problem is mitigating your ability to succeed, contact me **as soon as possible**. You can reach me via email or by scheduling office hours. The sooner you reach out, the easier it will be to find a path forward.

Grading Philosophy, Deadlines, & Late Work

Grading Philosophy: I understand grades can cause anxiety. To help with this, every assignment has a rubric that you will be graded on for transparency. As shown in the tables below, I automatically round your grade up ($\geq .5$) and you have the opportunity to receive 5% in extra credit, which equates to a letter grade. With these two things in mind, **do not** email me at the end of the semester asking to increase your grade or for additional extra credit.

Late Work: Deadlines are an unavoidable part of being a professional and this course is no exception. There will be no make-ups for the final policy brief unless there is an extenuating circumstance with documentation. Course requirements must be completed on or before the specified deadline. To help you improve your skills and understanding of the course, I am committed to returning feedback to you within 7 days of the due date. To accomplish this, I need you to turn in your assignments by the due date. However, I understand that life happens. Therefore, you all have **two** "Oops Tickets."

Oops Tickets: These tickets can be used to submit a late assignment or re-do an assignment to improve your grade, no questions asked. **You do not need to explain to me why you are using your ticket.** My goal is to not force you to explain any personal details to me that may be further exhausting or triggering to you. This will not be available for the final policy brief. You will **not** be allowed to use one of your tickets to re-do an assignment if there is suspicion of academic dishonesty.

Grading

Percentage	Assignment	Description
35%	Participation	Engagement with course materials.
15%	Assignments	Weekly assignments.
10%	Quizzes	Weekly quizzes.
40%	Entire Policy Brief	Final project and weekly assignments.
5%	Extra Credit	Weekly extra credit opportunity worth .625%.

Class Participation: Your participation grade will come from your assignments that take place in Perusall (can be reading, annotating, watching videos, listening to podcasts). Some assignments only require you to finish the entire content, others will require you to collaboratively annotate the content (aim for at least 3 quality annotations), this will be noted on Brightspace. Perusall will automatically grade these assignments. See more about Perusall and the participation grade in the Class Resources Module on Brightspace.

Assignments: There are multiple assignments throughout the course, and each will have equal weight.

Quizzes: Each week, there will be a quiz. Some are embedded into lectures, some require you to make an outline of course concepts, etc.

Policy Brief: Each week, there will be an assignment related to your policy brief. The breakdown is:

Percentage	Assignment	Description
15%	Final Policy Brief	Final project.
3%	Week 1: Topic	Posting 3 topics.
3%	Week 2: Background	Background on topic.
3%	Week 3: Cases	Choose cases.
3%	Week 4: Policy	Policy recommendations.
3%	Week 5: Draft	Turn in first draft.
10%	Week 6: Peer Review	Complete peer review.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentages	Description of Work
A+	95.5-100%	Work is exceptional in most respects
A	90.5-95.4%	Work is exceptional in many respects
A-	85.5-90.4%	Work is exceptional in some respects
B+	80.5-85.4%	Work is good in most respects
B	75.5-80.4%	Work is good in many respects
B-	70.5-75.4%	Work is good in some respects
C+	65.5-70.4%	Work is satisfactory in most respects
C	60.5-65.4%	Work is satisfactory in many respects
C-	55.5-60.4%	Work is satisfactory in some respects
D+	50.5-55.4%	Work is marginal in most respects
D	45.5-50.4%	Work is marginal in many respects
D-	40.5-45.4%	Work is marginal in some respects
F	0-40.4%	Work is failing in most respects

**Notice that grades at or over .5 will be rounded up*

Academic Integrity

While I want this space to be collaborative, all submitted assignments must be entirely original work (e.g., not AI-generated) and include proper attribution. I will be using a plagiarism checker on your assignments. If an academic integrity situation does arise, I reserve the right to give you a 0 on the assignment, and you will be subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University following Purdue Protocols. Please do not place yourself or me in that situation. For more resources about academic integrity, see the Class Resources module.

Use of AI in the course: My philosophy on the use of AI programs to complete assignments is that if you could ask a friend a question about an assignment, and how you use that information would not be considered cheating/plagiarism/academic dishonesty, that is okay. Beyond that, it falls under the academic integrity policy. As an example, if you are writing a paper and ask a friend "I'm thinking of writing my paper on this topic, what do you think?" and you have a conversation, that is okay. If you ask your friend what they wrote their paper on and copy it or copy parts of their paper, that is not okay.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Purdue University and I are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of all people. This class is a place where you will be treated with respect. I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, and abilities. All class members must contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment. Achieving equity in the classroom requires both myself as the instructor and you as students to identify and remove barriers that may prevent someone from full access or participation.

In our discussions, we will explore various challenging issues that can help enhance your understanding of different experiences and perspectives. I recognize that this can be challenging as some topics in this course can be controversial. However, in overcoming these challenges, we find the greatest rewards. I ask that you be respectful and have information to support your viewpoints. Please keep in mind the following:

- We are all in the process of learning about others and their experiences. If someone is making you uncomfortable, don't hesitate to contact me via email or anonymously in the form under the Class Resources module.
- Intention and impact are not always aligned, and we should respect the impact something may have on someone even if it was not the intention.
- We all come to the class with various experiences and a range of expertise. We should respect these in others while critically examining them in ourselves.

Netiquette

To help foster a tolerant, safe learning environment, please abide by the Netiquette rules for this course:

- Do not use offensive language and avoid slang language. Present ideas appropriately and clearly.
- Keep an “open mind” and be willing to express even your minority opinion.
- Seek and take feedback from others; learning from others is an important life skill.

When contacting me via email, please remember the critical skill of writing a professional email. Your emails should generally include the following: (1) a subject line briefly explaining the topic of the email and what class it pertains to (POL 429), (2) a respectful greeting (Hi Prof. Walker), (3) a straightforward question or request, and (4) your name. Emails lacking these criteria will not be returned. You can expect me to respond to most emails within 24 hours on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends.

Accessibility

I strive to make the learning experiences in this course as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, please notify me at the start of the semester to discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at: drc@purdue.edu or by phone: 765-494-1247. I will arrange to provide accommodations for those with them as a part of their DRC Course Accessibility Letter (CAL). You must release your CAL to me as soon as they are available so I can make these arrangements.

Mental Health and Wellness

As we all continue to cope with the news cycle and our hardships, I encourage you to focus on your mental and physical wellness. Below are some resources.

If you find yourself beginning to feel some stress, anxiety, and/or feeling slightly overwhelmed, try WellTrack.

If you need support and information about options and resources, please contact the Office of the Dean of Students.

If you find yourself struggling to find a healthy balance between academics, social life, stress, etc. sign up for free one-on-one virtual or in-person sessions with a Purdue Wellness Coach at RecWell.

If you are struggling and need mental health services contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). There is also a list of providers who are not affiliated with Purdue but who want to work with students.

If you are struggling to secure food or housing, you are urged to contact the the Office of the Dean of Students for support.

Course Schedule

Dates	Topic	Assignments
Week 1 6.16-6.23	What is Technopolitics?	Intro Assignments: • Read & Annotate the Syllabus • Email Introduction Defining Technopolitics: • Read & Annotate: Do Artifacts have Politics? • Lecture • Quiz: Analyze Technology as a Technopolitical Artifact Historical Foundations: • Watch: Is AI the Most Important Technology of the Century? • Lecture Technopolitics in Contemporary Systems: • Lecture • Assignment: Read One Article and Summarize Critical Perspectives and Power Dynamics: • Read & Annotate: Signaling Power and Signaling to Power Prepare for your Final Project: • Browse Materials in Final Policy Brief • Submit 3 Topics Extra Credit: • Respond to Article Discussion Post
Week 2 6.24-6.30	AI for Policy Analysis	What is Policy Analysis?: • Read & Annotate: Governing with Intelligence • Lecture Government AI Policies: • Read: State of Implementation of the OECD AI Principles • Read: AI in Local Government • Read & Annotate: Principles Alone Cannot Guarantee Ethical AI Healthcare, Fraud Detection, Risk Assessment: • Lecture • Read: AI Healthcare Benefits • Watch: Coded Bias Trailer • Watch: How Predictive Policing Software Works • Read: Using AI and Machine Learning to Reduce Government Fraud • Assignment: Real World Example of AI in Decision Making • Quiz: Reflection, Balancing Innovation with Accountability Prepare for your Final Project: • Look at Comments from Last Week • Start Topic Background Extra Credit: • One-Slide Explainer of an OECD AI Principle

Week 3 7.1-7.7	AI in Campaigns	Datafication of Voters: • Read & Annotate: Engineering the Public • Watch: What is the Cambridge Analytica scandal? • Lecture • Read & Annotate: The Old in the New Campaign Messaging: • Read: Time to Calm Down About AI and Politics • Read: This is Not an Ad • Assignment: Investigate One AI Technology • Quiz: Make a Concept Map Prepare for your Final Project: • Look Over Case Study Materials • Find Two Potential Cases Extra Credit: • Exit Ticket
Week 4 7.8-7.14	AI in Public Opinion	Measuring and Shaping Public Opinion: • Reflect on Goals • Read & Annotate: Using AI for Political Polling • Read: The Great British Brexit Robbery • Lecture Algorithmic Amplification and Polarization: • Watch: Algorithms & Echo Chambers • Read and Annotate: Challenging Truth and Trust • Lecture • Quiz: Embedded in Lecture Synthetic Influence: • Read & Annotate: Synthetic Media • Watch: Can Democracy Survive AI? • Assignment: Analyze Social Media Platform or Case Prepare for your Final Project: • Policy Comparison Extra Credit: • Analyze a Second Social Media Platform or Case
Week 5 7.15-7.21	AI Arms Race	What is the AI Arms Race?: • Read: Artificial Intelligence and National Security • Watch: Godfather of AI Warns Arms Race Risks Amplifying Dangers • Watch: In the Age of AI • Lecture Autonomous Weapons and Ethical Frontiers: • Read & Annotate: Pros & Cons of Autonomous Weapons Systems • Read: Transcending Weapon Systems • Lecture • Assignment: Social Media Post Techno-nationalism: • Read & Annotate: The Rise of Techno-Nationalism • Lecture • Quiz: Five-Minute Write Prepare for your Final Project: • Upload Draft Extra Credit: • Post on Social Media or Answer Questions

Week 6 7.22-7.28	AI and Capitalism	Surveillance Capitalism: • Watch: What is Surveillance Capitalism? • Watch: When Being Managed by Technology • Lecture Big Tech and the State: • Read & Annotate: Algorithmic Governance and the International Politics of Big Tech • Watch: What does Palantir Actually do? • Read: The AI Black Swan • Lecture • Assignment: Investigate an AI Firm AI and Labor: • Lecture • Read: Data Colonialism and the Political Economy of Big Tech • Read & Annotate: Exploiting the Margin • Quiz: Concept Match-Up Prepare your Final Project: • Peer Review Two Papers Extra Credit: • Meme/Poster of AI Data Extraction/Labor
Week 7 7.29-8.4	AI and Geopolitical Strategy	Techno-Democracy vs. Techno-Authoritarianism: • Lecture • Read: Confronting Reality in Cyberspace • Read & Annotate: How Democracies can Beat Techno-Authoritarianism • Watch: Technocracies, Power to the Experts Standards Setting: • Watch: Ethics of AI, Challenges and Governance • Read: The GDC Zero Draft • Assignment: Whose Standards? The Global South and AI Dependency: • Lecture • Read: The Future of AI is Sovereign • Read & Annotate: Powering AI in the Global South • Quiz: Choose your AI Future Prepare your Final Project: • Work on Final Submission Extra Credit: • Exit Ticket
Finals Week 8.5-8.8	Almost done!	Turn in your final policy brief!

This schedule is subject to change. Look at the Brightspace Modules for more details.