

Public Policy for the Digital World

PUBP 6540

Course Syllabus

Fall 2026

School of Public Policy, Ivan Allen College

Delivery: Online

Dates course will run: August – Dec, 2026

Canvas LMS and affiliated applications

Instructor Information

Professor Milton L. Mueller

Email: milton@gatech.edu

Office: DM Smith 314

Office Hours: Weekly via Zoom

General Course Information

Course Description

This course teaches students about the policy controversies surrounding the digital economy. It describes the rise of a digital infrastructure and the conflicts over privacy, surveillance, social control and economic regulation it has generated.

Pre- and/or Co-Requisites

Either PUBP 6725 or PUBP 6502 would be useful in handling this course material, but neither is required.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

Once completed, the students should be able to:

- Apply theories of political economy to the analysis and development of public policy interventions in the digital economy.
- Identify the component parts of the digital ecosystem and recognize the technical and economic interdependencies among them.
- Use cybernetic concepts to analyze the social control, regulation, influence, and manipulation enabled by digital technologies, or by efforts to regulate digital technologies.
- Propose and/or critically analyze public policy interventions in the digital economy.
- Identify the intersections of tech policy, trade policy, cybersecurity and privacy policy, innovation policy and foreign policy in the digital transformation.
- Recognize long-term trends in society's adaptation to information and communication technologies.

Course Materials

The course is built around recorded lectures, assigned readings, three quizzes, and three creative assignments. It is divided into 5 Modules. The first module introduces students to the subject matter of the course. Module 2 describes the historical emergence of digital technologies and their application to the theory and practice of social control, demonstrating the relevance of cybernetic models to digital political economy. Module 3 introduces students to the theoretical framework of political economy. Module 4 breaks down the industrial organization of the digital ecosystem. The 5th Module identifies and discusses the key areas of policy contention. As students enter each Module, they should watch the lectures **first**, then do the assigned readings using the Perusall application.

Course Requirements, Assignments & Grading

Students are graded on how well they meet the requirements of the assignments.

Description of Graded Components

Full descriptions of each assignment are available on Canvas. Students are encouraged to use office hours or the Ed Discussion function to resolve questions about assignments.

Assignments

There are four Reading Assignments using the Perusall application. Each one accounts for 5% of the total grade. Perusall readings are graded automatically by the application and measure your engagement and the quality and number of your annotations and interactions with other students. Three quizzes (10% each) test students' understanding of cybernetics, political economy theory, and the digital ecosystem. Creative Assignment 1 (20% of the total grade) is a test of a student's ability to model social phenomena using cybernetic concepts. In Creative Assignment 2, students analyze existing proposals using a prescribed template. In Creative Assignment 3, students develop their own policy proposal.

Assignment Due Dates

Creative Assignments, Quizzes and Reading Assignments should be submitted before midnight, US Eastern time on the due date specified in Canvas. Items generally remain available for 2 days after the due date and then become unavailable. All assignment due dates are based on US Eastern Time. Please convert to your local time zone using a [Time Zone Converter](#).

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

Quizzes are available for a week, Perusall reading assignments are available for two weeks, Creative assignments #1 and #2 are available for two weeks, and Creative Assignment #3 is up for a month. This class is too large to allow individualized re-negotiation of deadlines, but if students face an emergency or unique disabling circumstance, they can contact the TAs, explain the situation, and ask for an extension. Otherwise, 2% will be deducted for each day of lateness.

Assignment Grading Scale

Assignment	Weight
Module 1 Perusall Readings	5%
Module 2 Perusall Readings	5%
Creative Assignment #1 (feedback in social systems)	20%
Quiz #1 on Module 2	10%
Module 3 Perusall Readings	5%
Quiz #2 on Module 3	10%
Module 4 Perusall Reading	5%
Quiz #3 on Module 4	10%
Creative Assignment #2 (Engaging with real-world proposals)	15%
Creative Assignment #3 (Your own policy proposal)	15%

Grading Scale

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Course Policies, Expectations & Guidelines

Communication Policy

- Email course questions and personal concerns, including grading questions, to me or the TAs privately using Ed Discussion.
- Emails from within Canvas will be checked at least twice per day Monday through Friday; Saturday and Sunday; email is checked once per day. During the week, I will respond to all emails within 24 hours; on weekends and holidays, allow up to 48 hours. If there are special circumstances that will delay my response, I will make an announcement to the class.
- Student Forum/Q&A discussion boards will be checked twice per day Monday through Friday.
- Virtual office hours will be held using Zoom once a week. The time will be negotiated with the students at the beginning of class.
- For questions related to technology, [Digital Learning Support](#).

University Use of Electronic Email

A university-assigned student e-mail account is the official university means of communication with all students at Georgia Institute of Technology. Students are responsible for all information sent to them via their university-assigned e-mail account. If a student chooses to forward information in their university e-mail account, he or she is responsible for all information, including attachments, sent to any other e-mail account. To stay current with university information, students are expected to check their official university e-mail account and other electronic communications on a frequent and consistent basis. Recognizing that some communications may be time-critical, the university recommends that electronic communications be checked minimally twice a week.

Plagiarism & Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to write their own papers and to take exams and comment on readings with their own thoughts. Supplementary use of generative and automated tools is not banned but their use must be identified, and the prompts and tool cited. Software tools should never be used as a substitute for the student's own thinking and writing, only as a supplement. Plagiarism – the copying of large amounts of content from others and presenting it as your own - constitutes fraudulent misrepresentation for which no credit can be given. Appropriate sanctions will be applied. Plagiarism can be readily detected using AI tools. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/> or <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Collaboration & Group Work

There are no group projects in this class. There is a collaborative peer discussion of the final assignment in which students are encouraged to share ideas and evaluations.

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

Assignments, Quizzes and Reading Assignments should be submitted before midnight on the due date. Items generally remain available for 2 days after the due date and then become unavailable. Quizzes and Reading Assignments are available for a week at a minimum, more commonly for 10 days, and Assignments are up for a month. This class is too large to allow individualized re-negotiation of deadlines, but if students face an emergency or unique disabling circumstance, they can contact the TAs, explain the situation, and ask for an extension. Otherwise, 2% will be deducted for each day of lateness.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> for an articulation of some basic expectation that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.