This course will consider the possibility that we are beginning a new period in history in which information and collaboration will be more readily available than ever before. We will explore how new technologies do and do not change politics and society. Part of the story is looking at what people do with new media. This entails considering questions like ‘what is happening on Facebook?’ We will put Facebook and other Internet activities into a larger context by asking how they change and redistribute wealth and power. This raises additional questions about how entrepreneurs and and firms make money from new technologies and, conversely, how others’ interests are hurt. This, in turn, leads us to inquiries about how potential winners and losers use political means to shape what technologies are introduced and what people are allowed to do with them, all the while keeping in mind questions about how the nature of politics is changed by new technologies. Key political questions involve how the boundaries of and access to the public and the private are being changed. Considering so many interlocking questions will inevitably leave us with many unanswered questions – which is not unexpected if we are indeed in the first years of a new era. But if we accept the premise that new technologies are changing what we know and how we know it, then all of these issues revolve around a single central question: ‘how are we changed by our use of new media?’ and even if we cannot find a clear answer, we will have the satisfaction of having squarely faced a central question of our times.

Assignments and Assessment

1. Literature reviews. (15%) Each student will submit eight 1-2 page papers responding to weekly readings. Due in class on the Thursday of the week when the reading is assigned.

2. Assignments: (10%) a) Each student will submit five one page papers explaining what they did and the results for weekly 'assignments' listed in the weekly schedule below. b) Each student is required to present at least one ‘discovery of the week’ during the appropriate class segment. ‘Discoveries' can be anything that is clever, elegant, useful or funny and can be 'new' to the world or the student. Presentations should not last more than 2-3 minutes.

3. Group Project Proposal (20%). Each student will write a five page proposal for a group project and present it to the class. Projects may involve research, community service or many other possibilities, but must involve an opportunity to learn about the Internet or new media as a key component. Proposals should include a description of the project, an explanation of why it is interesting and important (including references to readings and/or lectures), and a description of what resources will be required. The key criterion for evaluating project proposals will be their potential to create opportunities for learning about the nature of the Internet and how it can be used effectively. Whether or not your project is approved by the instructor and attracts the needed participants will be considered in its evaluation. Due March 5.

4. Group project (20%). All students will join a group to implement one of the proposed projects. Each group will write a five page paper or create an equivalent web page explaining what they did and what they learned and present their results to the class during the last week of class.

5. Term web page or paper. (20%) (no more than 7 pages). Write a term paper on an aspect of the Internet or evaluate a sci fi novel or movie in which networks or computers are a central theme and which takes up issues discussed in class or in the literature on the Internet and new media.

6. Class Participation (15%). As this is a seminar-style class, students' critical engagement in class discussion is important. This requires: regular attendance and preparing readings and assignments and being ready to discuss them and completing readings in a timely manner. Following relevant current events and bringing them to the classes attention may also help.
Information and updates regarding course requirements and scheduling may be sent to the email account listed on D2L. Students who miss deadlines will only be allowed to make-up the work if the circumstances are truly exceptional, tragic and/or beyond their control. Some leniency may be shown if problems are discussed in advance. Regular attendance is expected as specified by university policy and failure to attend regularly may be sanctioned as specified by university policy. Academic dishonesty may receive the harshest sanctions allowed by university policy. Students who would like to improve their grade may do extra assignments or revise their papers, but must first consult with the instructor. Students seeking honors credit and graduate students will be required to complete additional assignments and should consult with the instructor.

Tentative Schedule of Topics and Readings:

Texts marked with an asterisk (*) are recommended. All others are required. This is a tentative list. Revisions may be announced in class or by email.

1. Introduction
   Jan. 15 & 17
   Douglas Rushkoff, *Program or Be Programmed: Ten Commands for a Digital Age* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2010), 7-27.

2. Technological Determinism
   Jan. 22 & 24
   Assignment: Talk to someone who is at least a generation older or younger than you. Ask about what they do with and how they think of computers and the Internet.

3. History of Media
   Jan. 29 & 31
   “Tim Wu on The Master Switch,” 11 January 11, Berkman Center for Internet and Society, [http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/events/luncheon/2011/01/wu].

4. History of Computers & the Internet
   Feb. 5 & 7

5. Collective Action
   Feb. 12 & 14
   Assignment: Locate an interesting and/or controversial Wikipedia page. Examine the recent history of edits. Make an edit. Check to see what happens.


6. Fragmentation

Assignment: Find a blog or web site promoting an extreme or absurd point of view (or for that matter one that is not so weird). Check out some of the sites that it links to or which link to it. Can you find loops?


7. Intellectual Property

Assignment: Talk to a couple of friends about how they obtain music. Why do they use or not use peer-to-peer services?


8. Project Proposals

Spring Break

9. Privacy & Surveillance

Assignment: Review the privacy settings for your Facebook account. What are you sharing with whom?


10. Crime & Security

Assignment: Offer to give a few of your friends or whomever a free pen (to be provided by the instructor) if they will give you the password for their MU email, Gmail or Facebook account.


Easter Holiday

March 28-April 1

11. American Politics

Campaign 2.0


Easter Holiday

March 28-April 1

12. Authoritarian Politics

Arab Spring or China?


April 9 & 11

13. Regulating the Internet


April 16 & 18

14. Conclusions

TBD

April 23 & 25

15. Project Reports

April 30 & May 2

Final Papers Due: Wednesday, May 8 at 3:00 pm

Learning objectives for this class: 1) Gain an understanding of how media in general and the Internet in particular have shaped politics; 2) Gain an understanding of the major issues involved in regulating the Internet; 3) Become more effective at finding and evaluating information and ideas found on the Internet; 4) Improve liberal arts skills of critical thinking, research, and communication.