Course description
In a single generation, we have witnessed unprecedented change in how technology is used in work, play, and everyday lives. Most of today’s college students take smartphones and social media for granted; however, how often do they stop to consider the implications of these technologies on their daily lives?

In this course, we move beyond the surface to consider the role of contextual factors in technology. How does one’s race, gender, religious/political affiliations, and sexual orientation influence their use of technology? How does technology help and hinder marginalized groups? How do these groups’ experiences vary in other parts of the world?

This course provides an opportunity for students to explore how people with different backgrounds and life experiences engage with technology, as well as the technology-related challenges these groups face. Moreover, the class examines these topics within the broader framework of power and how existing structures of power and privilege create additional challenges for culturally marginalized and minority groups.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Explain how cultural beliefs influence technology use at the individual, organizational, or societal levels.
- Reflect in depth about critical similarities, differences, and intersections between their own and others’ cultures or sub-cultures so as to demonstrate a deepening or transformation of original perspectives.
- Articulate how current power structures create unequal opportunities and access for different subsets of society.
- Recognize and describe how your specific life circumstances have influenced your experiences with technology.
- Identify the challenges faced by minority groups when engaging with technology.
- Effectively use skills to negotiate cross-cultural situations or conflicts in interactions inside or outside the classroom.

Required Resources
There is no required textbook. All readings are available on the course website: [elms.umd.edu](http://elms.umd.edu)

We will have a shared “Team Drive” on Google Drive. You will receive an invite to the shared drive during the second week of class. Many in-class activities, notes, and other materials will be managed there.
Campus Policies

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland’s policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

- Academic integrity
- Student and instructor conduct
- Accessibility and accommodations
- Attendance and excused absences
- Grades and appeals
- Copyright and intellectual property

Please visit [www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html](http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html) for the Office of Undergraduate Studies’ full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions.

Activities, Learning Assessments, & Expectations for Students

Course Activities
Your final grade will be based on the following components:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Assessments</th>
<th>Points Each</th>
<th>Category Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-class reading reflections</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class activities and participation</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog Posts</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Leader</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester Project &amp; Presentation (five parts)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Assessment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points:</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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*Pre-class reading reflections (20%):* As a 400-level, discussion-heavy class, we will be engaging significantly with literature on course-related topics, including both academic articles as well as popular press. You are expected to read any materials prior to each class. Starting in Week 2, there will be a prompt for every class about that class’ reading. The prompt will be straightforward, asking you to respond in two paragraphs (approximately 150-250 words) to an element of the reading. This serves as an incentive for you to engage with the material and as a mechanism for me to gauge comprehension and confusion on that week’s topic. There will be 25 prompts throughout the semester, but I will only count 20 toward your final grade (meaning each reflection is worth 1% of your grade, and you can skip five during the course of the semester without penalty). You’ll get full credit for turning the assignment in on time *(by 9:00am the day of class)* and being on topic; you’ll receive half-credit if it is submitted less than 24 hours late and is on topic; and no credit for not turning in an assignment, for it being more than 24 hours late, or for it being off topic.

*In-class activities and participation (15%):* This class is relatively small (~40 students) and has been structured as a seminar; its success will be based on the active participation of everyone involved. I have specifically procured a TERP classroom to allow us opportunities to interact and work in a variety of group settings. Everyone will rotate between six-tops (tables) throughout the semester so you have the opportunity to work with many classmates grade will be based on your contributions to these discussions.

How will I assess your grade for this component? If you regularly attend class and engage in participation, you should be fine. My basic rule of thumb is, if I can picture you in my head and know your name, you’re probably contributing sufficiently to class. We will regularly be working on activities where I will collect notes from each...
group; this provides a written account of your attendance. The best way for you to ensure you receive full credit for this component of your grade is to come to class prepared, having completed assigned readings, and be willing to engage in class discussions with your classmates.

**Note:** You’ll get an “interim grade” midway through the semester to give you a sense of how I think you’re doing, and whether you need to participate more or maintain your current level of participation. See ELMS for more information.

**Blog posts (6 total, lowest score dropped; 4% each/20% total):** Throughout the semester, we will be joined by speakers with diverse cultural backgrounds as well as those who conduct research with marginalized groups. These speakers will be working in technology spaces or researching technological challenges. We may also watch presentations or documentaries on related topics. Students will then be asked to write a 600-800 word blog post responding to a series of prompts specific to that topic. We will also use class time to continue these conversations in small groups.

**Note:** The lowest score from the blog post assignments will be dropped at the end of the semester. In other words, you can skip one of these assignments without penalty.

**Discussion leader (5%):** In the first week of class, you’ll complete a survey, including a question asking you to select the three topics that most interest you. I will assign two students to each class session and on that day of class, you’ll be the discussion leader. This will involve you identifying a news story that is relevant to that class’ topic, spending ~5 minutes discussing it at the start of that class, and being my “go to” for driving class discussion. Your grade will be based on whether you submit the article on time, how prepared you are to discuss the article, and your contributions to the broader class discussion.

If you miss class on the day you are the discussion leader, you will not receive credit for this assignment. If you are going to miss class because you are ill, you must tell me at least three hours BEFORE class and I will reschedule you for another class.

**Semester project (30%):** You will form groups of 2-3 classmates to identify a topic directly related to this class and design a project that fits your and your partners’ strengths and meets the criteria detailed below. The project has some degree of flexibility to support the diversity of InfoSci students, and I am always open to new ideas. That said, if you have an idea for a project that is dramatically outside the box, come talk to me about it early in the semester.

The goal of this project is to demonstrate mastery of the course’s learning objectives. In particular, I want you to identify a technology challenge faced by one or more groups of people and consider the role that technology plays in both improving and worsening that problem. For example, a problem we’ll talk about in class is the real name policy that sites like Facebook use. This policy makes sense at some level because it helps link users to their real identities and thus (one would assume) lessens the opportunity for someone to pretend to be someone else. At the same time, trans people, Native Americans, and many other groups have run into challenges with the way this policy is enforced. For the many users with standard names, this may not seem like a problem, but for those who are being denied a key part of their identity, this can be very harmful.

Once you’ve identified and described the history of the technology problem and who it affects, you should also detail what has been done to solve the problem. To continue with Facebook’s Real Name policy, they have addressed this issue in a somewhat haphazard fashion, and there are many who still contend it has not been solved.

Finally, you and your partner should detail potential future solutions to this problem, focusing on the readings, activities, and conversations we’ve had in class around intersectionality, accessibility, and other topics related to your issue. These solutions should be detailed and show significant and careful thought about balancing the various costs to implement your solution.
Potential deliverables for this project include, but are not limited to:

- A white paper or case study of approximately 3000-4000 words plus references and figures.
- An educational web site that could be used as a resource to educate people about why this topic is problematic. Content should be detailed, include both depth and breadth of topic coverage, and must include references.
- An explainer-style video (~4-6 minutes) that gives a highly visual, succinct overview of the topic. I would only suggest doing this if you have video editing experience because my expectations of the quality will be high. A short report (1000-1500 words) should accompany the video an provide an overview on the topic (including references).

Early in the semester, I will provide opportunities for you to identify areas of interest and match you up with a classmate with whom you share interests. You can also self-select your partner. You will then submit a 1-2 page (single-spaced, no cover page) proposal in Week 7, and you’ll get feedback from me and from two of your classmates. A progress report that includes draft content completed to date will be due in Week 12. The final paper will be due Week 15 of class. That final week will also be set aside for group presentations. Over the last two classes, each group will present their project in a 5-7 minute presentation with slides.

Your grade on this assignment will break down as follows: Proposal (2.5%), Peer Feedback (2.5%), Draft/Progress Report (2.5%), Deliverable (15%), Presentation (7.5%).

Note: You will also complete a self/peer evaluation to identify the components of the project you and your groupmates completed, and grade adjustments will be made if necessary.

Final assessment (10%): University of Maryland policy is that each class should hold a final exam. In lieu of a standard exam, I will assign an essay question on the last day of class. Students will need to submit their essay, electronically via ELMS, by the scheduled exam time, giving you approximately one week to complete. The essay will be open note, but it is an individual assignment and therefore you are not allowed to discuss the essay with any of your classmates. We will not meet in person during the final exam time.

Grades
Grades are not given, but earned. Your grade is determined by your performance on the learning assessments in the course and is assigned individually (not curved). If earning a particular grade is important to you, please speak with me at the beginning of the semester so that I can offer some helpful suggestions for achieving your goal.

All assessment scores will be posted on the course ELMS page. Note that the grades are assigned in points and the points add up to 100, so if you want to calculate your grade at any point in the semester, you merely need to add up the points you’ve earned. If you would like to review any of your grades, or have questions about how something was scored, please email me to schedule a time for us to meet in my office.

Missed Deadlines: If you will not be able to meet an assignment deadline, contact me before the due date to explain why you will need to submit the assignment late; these will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Late Assignments Policy: A 10% penalty will be deducted for each day or part of a day that an assignment is late (starting one minute beyond the due date time). Please prepare in advance so that you will not encounter technical difficulties that will result in your work receiving a late penalty. If you have a conflict with the due date, assignments can always be submitted early. Generally speaking, illnesses are not an excuse for late assignments because you will receive the assignments at least one week before they are due.
**Final Grades:** Final letter grades are assigned based on the percentage of total assessment points earned. To be fair to everyone, I have to establish clear standards and apply them consistently, so please understand that being close to a cutoff is not the same this as making the cut \((89.99 \neq 90.00)\). It would be unethical to make exceptions for some and not others.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Grade Cutoffs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ 97.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A 94.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 90.00%</td>
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**Course-Specific Policies**

**Use of computers, phones or tablet devices during our class meetings.** The structure of this class is highly interactive. You will be working in groups frequently on questions, case studies, or scenarios I present. Sometimes these activities will require (or will benefit from) technology use. Therefore, I will not ban technology use in class. However, because we are a relatively small class and because participation and interaction are such important components of class, I expect any technology use to be related to class content. Hopefully, you are reading this syllabus carefully. If so, email me a picture of the cutest lolcat you can find by September 5, 12pm with the course name and number in the subject line for extra credit. But don’t tell anyone else. Make them earn it! If I observe you engaging in technology use that may be distracting to their classmates, I will ask you to either stop or to leave for the day.

I expect you to make the responsible and respectful decision to refrain from using your cellphone in class. If you have critical communication to attend to, please excuse yourself and return when you are ready.

**Missing Class.** If you are going to miss class, you should speak with a classmate to get notes. You do not need to contact me if you are going to miss a single class, as we do not have graded activities in class. However, if you miss a speaker or are going to miss more than one class in a row, email me so we can make sure you do not fall behind. Repeated absences throughout the course of the semester will likely have a negative impact on your participation grade, as you will not be able to participate in class activities and discussions.

**Turnitin Originality Checker.** For this course, some of your assignments will be collected via Turnitin on our course ELMS page. I have chosen to use this tool because it can help you improve your scholarly writing and help me verify the integrity of student work. For information about Turnitin, how it works, and the feedback reports you may have access to, visit [Turnitin Originality Checker for Students](#).

**Policy on Academic Misconduct.** Cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct irrespective of scope and circumstances, as required by university rules and regulations. It is crucial to understand that the instructors do not have a choice of following other courses of actions in handling these cases. There are severe consequences of academic misconduct, some of which are permanent and reflected on the student’s transcript. For details about procedures governing such referrals and possible consequences for the student please visit [http://osc.umd.edu/OSC/Default.aspx](http://osc.umd.edu/OSC/Default.aspx).

It is very important that you complete your own assignments, and do not share any files or other work. The best course of action to take when a student is having problems with an assignment question is to contact the instructor. The instructor will be happy to work with students while they work on the assignments.
University of Maryland Code of Academic Integrity, The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit http://shc.umd.edu/SHC/Default.aspx

Special Needs. Students with disabilities should inform the instructor of their needs at the beginning of the semester. Please also contact the Disability Support Services (301-314-7682 or http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/). DSS will make arrangements with the student and the instructor to determine and implement appropriate academic accommodations. Students encountering psychological problems that hamper their course work are referred to the Counseling Center (301-314-7651 or http://www.counseling.umd.edu/) for expert help.

Get Some Help!

You are expected to take personal responsibility for your own learning. This includes acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. Everyone can benefit from some expert guidance on time management, note taking, and exam preparation, so I encourage you to consider visiting http://ter.ps/learn and schedule an appointment with an academic coach. Sharpen your communication skills (and improve your grade) by visiting http://ter.ps/writing and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center. Finally, if you just need someone to talk to, visit http://www.counseling.umd.edu.

Everything is free because you have already paid for it, and everyone needs help… all you have to do is ask for it.

Names/Pronouns and Self Identifications

The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body, and we are committed to fostering equitable classroom environments. I invite you, if you wish, to tell us how you want to be referred to both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). The pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity. Visit trans.umd.edu to learn more.

Additionally, how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, is your choice whether to disclose (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives) and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and I ask you to do the same for all of your fellow Terps.

Course Schedule (full references for readings listed below schedule)
Note: readings may be added or changed throughout the semester. Check ELMS Modules for most up-to-date list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>CLASS DATE</th>
<th>DURING OUR CLASS MEETING</th>
<th>WHAT’S DUE? *</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tues 8/28</td>
<td>Course overview In class activity: Bead activity</td>
<td>Review Syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Thurs 8/30</td>
<td>Overview of Theories/Frameworks Used in this Class: Power, Privilege, Inequality, Agency, Intersectionality, Surveillance</td>
<td>Complete Course Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Class Date</td>
<td>During Our Class Meeting</td>
<td>What's Due? *</td>
</tr>
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*Recommended:* Pensador (2013), Warschauer et al. (2010) |               |
| 3  | Tues 9/4   | Backgrounder on Diversity and Inclusion  
*Readings:* Sherbin & Ripa (2017), McGirt (2017), Quinetta Roberson TED Talk  
*Recommended:* Jardine (2016); Riordan (2014) |               |
| 4  | Thurs 9/6  | Digital Divide & Digital Literacy  
Gonzales (2016); Fairlie (2017) |               |
| 5  | Tues 9/11  | Technology's Role: Both Oppressor and Uplifter  
*Readings:* Rotman (2014), LaFrance (2016), Lewis-Kraus (2016) | Blog Post #1 |

**Part 2: Sex & Gender**

| 6  | Thurs 9/13 | Women & the Tech Pipeline: Education & Employment  
*Recommended:* Dresden et al. (2018) | Semester Project Teams Finalized |
| 7  | Tues 9/18  | The “Tech Bro” Perspective: A Case Study of the “Google Memo”  
*Readings:* James Damore’s memo, “Google's Ideological Echo Chamber,” and coverage of his subsequent firing |               |
| 8  | Thurs 9/20 | Women Using Tech for Change: The Good, the Bad & the Ugly  
*Readings:* Blackwell et al. (2017); Chou (2018); Time Person of Year: The Silence Breakers (2017); Vincent (2017)  
*Recommended:* Dwoskin & McGregor (2018) |               |
| 9  | Tues 9/25  | Women & Gaming: Feminist Frequency, Gamergate, Women Designers  
*Readings:* Kowert et al. (2015), Campbell (2017)  
*Recommended:* Malone (2017), Burgess et al. (2017) | Blog Post #2 |
| 10 | Thurs 9/27 | LGBTQ: Managing Multiple Identities Online  
*Readings:* Jackson et al. (2017), Daniels & Gray (2014) |               |

**Part 3: Race & Ethnicity**

| 11 | Tues 10/2  | The Problem with Pumpkin Spice Feminism  
| 13 | Tues 10/9  | Tools for Racializing Surveillance  
| 14 | Thurs 10/11| The Digital Barbershop: How black culture spreads online  
*Readings:* Steele (2016), Brock (2012) |               |
| 15 | Tues 10/16 | #BLM & Online Activism  
*Readings:* Stephen (2015); Frecelon et al. (2016); only need to read intro & conclusion | Peer Feedback on Proposals |
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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>CLASS DATE</th>
<th>DURING OUR CLASS MEETING</th>
<th>WHAT’S DUE? *</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part 4: Accessibility, Disability, and (Mental) Health</strong></td>
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| 16 | Thurs 10/18 | Technology, Accessibility & Disability: Technology Use by Aging Populations  
**Readings:** Lazar et al. (2017)  
**Recommended:** Gravenhorst et al. (2014) | Blog Post #4 |
| 17 | Tues 10/23 | Technology, Accessibility & Disability: Designing for the Able-bodied—and those who get left behind  
**Readings:** Chapter from Alper (2016); Kooragayala & Srini (2016) | |
| 18 | Thurs 10/25 | Technology, Health, and Well-Being  
**Readings:** Santoro et al. (2015); Twenge (2017) | |
| **Part 5: Geographic Intersections of Culture & Technology** | | | |
| 19 | Tues 10/30 | Extremists’ Technology Use: A case study of ISIS’ messaging and recruitment strategies  
**Readings:** Koerner (2016), Talbot (2015), Patrikarakos (2017)  
**Recommended:** Berger & Morgan (2015) | |
| 20 | Thurs 11/1 | Technology Use by Immigrant Populations: Challenges and Opportunities  
**Readings:** Manjoo (2016), Smiley (2017), Bedoya (2017) | Blog Post #5 |
| 21 | Tues 11/6 | **ELECTION DAY – NO CLASS MEETING (if eligible, please vote!)**  
(Note: there will be a discussion activity on Canvas) | |
| 22 | Thurs 11/8 | Technology Use by in Rural and Poor America  
**Readings:** Dan Greene reading; Chapter from Gray (2009) | Progress Report/ Draft Project |
| 23 | Tues 11/13 | ICT4D: Case study of One Laptop Per Child  
**Readings:** Kraemer et al. (2009); Watters (2012), Robertson (2018)  
**Recommended:** Cristia et al. (2012) | |
| **Part 6: Next Steps: What Questions Future Information Professionals Should Be Asking** | | | |
| 24 | Thurs 11/15 | Open Day: Class Decides Topic** | |
| 25 | Tues 11/20 | **Big Question #1:** How do we fix the diversity problem in the tech sector? | Blog Post #6 |
| **Thursday, 11/22: Thanksgiving | School Closed, No Class** | | |
| 26 | Tues 11/27 | **Big Question #2:** How do we best amplify marginalized groups’ voices and empower that fighting for social justice? | |
| 27 | Thurs 11/29 | Presentations, Day 1 | Project Presentation Materials uploaded |
| 28 | Tues 12/4 | Presentations, Day 2 | Project Presentation Materials uploaded |
| 29 | Thurs 12/6 | **Bringing it back to the start:** Reassessing the role of power, privilege, and dominance in shaping cultural experiences of technology | Semester Projects, Evaluations Due |
| **Final “Exam” Due Date TBD:** No in-class exam; final assessment submitted on ELMS | | | |
* Pre-class reading reflections are assigned for every class that has readings assigned starting in Week 2, so they aren’t listed in the “what’s due column.” To receive full credit, you should complete them by 9:00am the day class meets. Remember that I will only be grading the top 20 of these reflections and there will be 25 classes with readings assigned.

** There are so many topics we could cover in this class that we won’t have time for, so I will leave a discussion forum open through November 1 to allow students to share ideas for topics they want to discuss during Class 24 (11/15). I’ll then pull together and post readings based on the most popular idea(s). There will also be a Google Form you can use for submitting ideas in case you don’t want your name linked with your suggestion.

**Full References for Readings** (also see ELMS for PDFs)


Robertson, A. (2018, April 16). OLPC's $100 laptop was going to change the world — then it all went wrong. The Verge. Available: https://www.theverge.com/2018/4/16/17233946/olpc$s-100-laptop-education-where-is-it-now


