



COURSE UNIT DESCRIPTION

Course Unit Title	Code
UNLOCKING DIGITAL CAPITALISM	-

Lecturer(s)	Department(s)
Coordinator: j. assit. Jūratė Kavaliauskaitė Other(s):	Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius university, Vokiečių str. 10, LT-01130, Vilnius, tel. +370 52514130, e-mail: tspimi@tspmi.vu.lt

Study cycle	Type of the course unit
First	Elective

Mode of delivery	Course unit delivery period	Language (s) of instruction
Face-to-face	6 (spring) semester	English

Requirements for students	
Pre-requisites: -	Co-requisites (if any): -

Number of credits allocated	Total student's workload	Contact hours	Self-study hours
5	135	32	103

Purpose of the course unit: programme competences to be developed		
Taking an interdisciplinary perspective as a starting point, the course invites to examine <i>digital capitalism</i> in terms of an emerging concept and a peculiar social condition, defined by the complex relationships and mutual constitutions of modern capitalist economy, tech innovation, digital society and evolving sociotechnical imaginaries. Without overlooking the question of power and subjectivation, the course also aims to develop students' understanding of the variegated nature and effects of global digital transformation, as well as to build their ability to critically reflect upon its trends, contradictions, dilemmas, and implications for (un)anticipated economic, socio-cultural and political change.		
Learning outcomes of the course unit	Teaching and learning methods	Assessment methods
The students will get acquainted the development of the post-industrial change and contemporary techno-optimism and will be able to explicate the leading contemporary theories, key intellectual debates and criticism of digital capitalism	Seminars (analysis of the leading literature in the field, assessment of conceptual debates; group discussions and case studies), individual studies (critical literature studies, the analysis of theoretical debates), a collaborative essay	Participation in seminars, a collaborative essay, an exam
The students will be able to comprehend, independently and critically assess empirical scholarly research, other types of studies as well as public information related to the nexus of digital economy, technological innovation and socio-cultural change.	Seminars (analysis of the leading literature and empirical research in the field, group discussions and case studies), individual studies (the analysis of practical cases), assignments	Participation in seminars, assignments
The students will be able to independently analyze various elements and dimensions of the contemporary social life and economy in terms of their relationship to digital capitalism, without overlooking potential power asymmetries, empirical complexities, and extra-economic factors.	Seminars (analysis of the leading literature and empirical research in the field; group discussions and case studies), individual studies (critical literature studies, the analysis of empirical cases), assignments and a collaborative essay	Participation in seminars, assignments, a collaborative essay, an exam
Students will be able to develop evidence-based policy analyses and proposals with regards to digital capitalism and technological innovation.	Problem-oriented lecture, seminars (analysis of the leading literature and empirical research in the field, assessment of conceptual debates; group discussions and case studies), individual studies (critical literature studies, the analysis of theoretical	

	debates and practical cases), a collaborative essay, assignments	
The students will improve their critical reading skills, will be able to unambiguously and reasonably convey own well-grounded opinion, arguments and conclusions in written and to express their ideas in a clear, compelling, and self-reflexive manner orally in an academic and professional manner and to evaluate the positions assumed by others.	Problem-oriented lecture, seminars (analysis of the leading literature and empirical research in the field, assessment of conceptual debates; group discussions and case studies), individual studies (critical literature studies, the analysis of theoretical debates and practical cases), a collaborative essay, assignments	
The students will be able to apply open communication skills and respectful interpersonal dialogue, as well as practice constructive collaboration, sensitive to values of diversity, equity, and inclusion	Seminars (analysis of the leading literature and empirical research in the field, assessment of conceptual debates; group discussions and case studies), a collaborative essay	Participation in seminars, a collaborative essay

Content: breakdown of the topics	Contact hours							Self-study: hours and assignments	
	Lectures	Consultations	Seminars	Practical sessions	Laboratory activities	Internship/work placement	Contact hours	Self-study hours	Assignments
DIGITAL CAPITALISM: GENEALOGIES AND IDEAS									
1. After factory: genealogies of the new era			2				2	4	Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Miller, V. (2020). <i>Understanding digital culture</i> . 2 nd ed. London: SAGE Publications (Ch. 2, "The Economic Foundations of the Information Age"), 55-86. - Castells, M. (2010 [1996]). <i>The Rise of the Network Society</i> . Chichester, Malden, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 210-215.
2. The sublime of IT			2				2	6	Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Streeter, Th. (2016). <i>The net effect: romanticism, capitalism, and the internet</i> . New York: New York University Press, 44-92.
3.-4. Tech innovation and capitalism: conceptual trajectories (I & II)			4				4	10	Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Dean, J. (2005). "Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics." <i>Cultural Politics</i> , 1(1): 51-74. - Boutang, Y.M. (2012). <i>Cognitive Capitalism</i> . Cambridge: Polity: 47-80, 83, 87-91. *** - Zuboff, S. (2019). <i>The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power</i> , London: Profile Books: 387-409. -Atanasoski, N. & Vora, K. (2019). <i>Surrogate Humanity: Race, Robots, and the Politics of Technological Futures</i> . Durham: Duke University Press: 1–26.
DIGITAL ECONOMY: THE ENTERPRISING SELF AND PROSUMER AT WORK									
5. Troubles of role modelling: the			2				2	5	Reading and preparation for in-class discussion:

ethos of Silicon Valley								- Baker, Br. (2015). <i>Theology and California. Theological Refractions on California's Culture</i> (Chapter 26, "Silicon Valley and the Spirit of Innovation"). London: Routledge: 163-188. - Wajcman, J. (2019). "How Silicon Valley sets time." <i>New Media & Society</i>, 21(6): 1272–1289.
6. Politics of entrepreneurs(hip) 2.0			2				2	4 Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Mancinelli, F. (2020). "Digital nomads: freedom, responsibility and the neoliberal order." <i>Information Technology and Tourism</i>, 22(3): 417-437
7. After collaborative commons			2				2	6 Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Schörpf, P. et al. (2017). "Triangular love–hate: Management and control in creative crowdworking." <i>New Technology, Work and Employment</i>, 32(1): 43–58. - Delfanti, A. (2021). "Machinic dispossession and augmented despotism: Digital work in an Amazon warehouse." <i>New Media & Society</i>, 23(1):39–55. Home assignment: exploration of up-to-date empirical cases of unionization in digital or sharing economy
8. Sociability, semiotic production and affect valorised: what do we do on social media?			2				2	5 Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Gerlitz, C., Helmond, A. (2013). "The Like Economy: Social buttons and the data-intensive web." <i>New Media & Society</i>, 15(8): 1348-1365. - Gandini, A. (2021). "Digital labour: an empty signifier?" <i>Media, Culture & Society</i>, 43(2): 369–380.
9. The economy of a digital gift: what is for free on platforms?			2				2	4 Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Elder-Vass, D. (2016). <i>Profit and Gift in the Digital Economy</i>. Cambridge University Press (Chapter 8, "Does Google give gifts?"): 171-191.
DIGITAL SOCIETY: DATA (SUBJECT) WANTS TO BE FREE								
10. Datafication, data colonialism & the issue of justice			2				2	6 Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Viera Magalhães, J., Couldry, N. (2020). "Giving by taking away: big tech, data colonialism and the reconfiguration of social good." <i>International Journal of Communication</i>, 15: 343–362. - Taylor, L. (2017). "What is data justice? The case for connecting digital rights and freedoms globally." <i>Big Data & Society</i>, 4(2), 1-14.
11. Common good, care and privacy in a datafied world			2				2	5 Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Sharon, T. (2018). "When digital health meets digital capitalism, how many common goods are at stake?" <i>Big Data & Society</i>, 5(2): 1-12. - Woods, H. S. (2018). "Asking more of Siri and Alexa: feminine persona in service of surveillance capitalism." <i>Critical Studies in Media Communication</i>, 35(4): 334-349. Home assignment: analysis of classical/ fresh empirical cases, representative of the topic
12. Algorithmic memory & forgetting			2				2	4 Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Esposito E. (2017). "Algorithmic memory and the right to be forgotten on the web." <i>Big Data & Society</i>, January-June:1-11.

									- Jacobsen B. (2020). "Sculpting digital voids: The politics of forgetting on Facebook." <i>Convergence</i> , 27(2), 357–370.
13. Making sense of algorithmic commodification			2				2	5	Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Lupton D. (2020). "'Not the Real Me': Social Imaginaries of Personal Data Profiling." <i>Cultural Sociology</i> , 15(1): 3-21. Home assignment: self-reflection on social/algorithmic media use and experience
14. Hacking digital capitalism?			2				2	7	Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Mosco, V. (2018). <i>Becoming digital: toward a post-internet society</i> . Bingley: Emerald Publishing: 175-212. - Mason, P. (2020). <i>Postcapitalism</i> (video) Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Internet access: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3M2-8Hnde2s&t=1409s
15. "Living with/ beyond digital capitalism": students' essay ideas				2			2	10	Work on a collaborative essay (in groups) in the framework of a given topic + preparation to present preliminary ideas.
16. Final consultations		2					2	2	Preparation for consultations (course material review, questions, etc.)
Self-preparation for a final exam								20	Independent revision of the course material, class notes and feedback provided to completed assignments
Total		2	28	2			32	103	

Assessment strategy	Weight, percentage	Assessment period	Assessment criteria
Participation in seminars and home assignments	40	During semester	The assessment criteria and levels of achievement are the following: 4 points – misses max 1-2 seminars without a legitimate reason, participates in seminars actively and effectively, being constantly well-prepared, having pre-class readings and other (home) tasks completed in time; demonstrates superior performance – shows initiative in discussions and group work, meets and exceeds expectations in personal contributions, feedback, critical reasoning, interpretation and argumentation, raised questions and offered ways to deal with posed problems or given tasks; engages with colleagues in a constructive, respectful and facilitating manner. 3 points - misses up to 20% of seminars without a legitimate reason, all other previously listed criteria having been met; or demonstrates higher than average performance from time to time: being prepared, having pre-class readings and other tasks completed in time, remains moderate in showing initiative and active participation in a class, although meets expectations in critical reasoning, interpretation and argumentation, raised questions and offered ways to deal with posed problems or proposed complex cases; engages with colleagues in a constructive and respectful manner. 2 points - misses up to 30% of seminars without a legitimate reason and demonstrates average and lower than average performance: regularly fails to properly prepare for a class; yet shows willingness to actively participate in seminar discussions/ activities and engage with colleagues in a respectful manner. 1 point - misses up to 30% of seminars without a legitimate reason and demonstrates lower than average performance: regularly fails to properly prepare for the class, remains relatively passive in class activities and fails to provide satisfactory contribution if requested; poorly engages with colleagues. 0 points – misses more than 30% of seminars, or accomplishment of the course requirements is not sufficient to receive a passing grade.

			If a student receives 0 points for seminars, the final course evaluation is negative (failed) independent of the number of points received for other parts of the course.
A collaborative essay (in groups)	30	During and at the end of semester	Students write a collaborative essay (in groups) – 2500-3000 words – on a chosen aspect, phenomenon or issue of digital capitalism to expand knowledge and public/ theoretical debates in any area addressed in or related to the course. The topic/ idea of an essay should be presented in class and approved by the lecturer. The assessment criteria and levels of achievement are the following: 3 points – a well-formulated, original idea/ problem, the quality of the result is higher than average; minor flaws in a single area of the work are acceptable. 2 points – the idea of an essay has not been presented in class, or the quality of the result is average; some shortcomings in several areas of the work are acceptable. 1 point – the quality of the results is poor; major problems in several areas of the work are acceptable. 0 points – the essay is not delivered, or the quality of work is unacceptable, failing to meet basic course requirements and/ or standards of academic integrity/ honesty. If a student receives 0 points for an essay, the final course evaluation is negative (failed) independent of the number of points received for other parts of the course.
A final exam	30	At the end of semester	The assessment criteria and levels of achievement are the following in this section: 3 points – correct, detailed and comprehensive answers to questions, strong argumentation, ability to apply concepts and gained knowledge to reflect upon and analyze (new) empirical phenomena. 2 points – partial answers to questions, average argumentation, poor ability to relate theoretical knowledge and practice. 1 point – poor answers to questions (or missing answers to at least 1 question), average argumentation, difficulties to assess empirical phenomena using core concepts and theories of the course. 0 points – does not complete the examination, or the quality of delivered results fails to meet basic requirements and/ or standards of academic integrity/ honesty. If a student receives 0 points for an exam, the final course evaluation is negative (failed) independent of the number of points received for other parts of the course.

Author	Year of publication	Title	Issue of periodical or volume of publication	Publishing place and house or web link
Compulsory reading				
Atanasoski, N. & Vora, K.	2019	Surrogate Humanity: Race, Robots, and the Politics of Technological Futures		Durham: Duke University Press
Boutang, Y.M.	2012	Cognitive Capitalism		Cambridge: Polity
Dean, J.	2005	Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics	Cultural Politics, 1(1): 51-74	https://muse.jhu.edu/article/584152
Miller, V.	2020	Understanding digital culture	2 nd ed.	London: SAGE
Mosco, V.	2018	Becoming digital: toward a post-internet society		Bingley: Emerald Publishing
Streeter, Th.		The net effect: romanticism, capitalism, and the internet		New York: New York University Press
Zuboff, S	2019	The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power		London: Profile Books
Recommended reading				
Baker, Br.	2014	Theology and California. Theological Refractions on California's Culture		London: Routledge

Castells, M.	2010 [1996]	The Rise of the Network Society		Chichester, Malden, Oxford: Wiley- Blackwell
Delfanti, A.	2021	Machinic dispossession and augmented despotism: Digital work in an Amazon warehouse	New Media & Society, 23(1):39– 55	https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1461444819891613
Elder-Vass, D.	2016	Profit and Gift in the Digital Economy		Cambridge University Press
Esposito E.	2017	Algorithmic memory and the right to be forgotten on the web	Big Data & Society, January- June:1-11	https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2053951717703996
Gandini, A.	2021	Digital labour: an empty signifier?	Media, Culture & Society, 43(2): 369–380	https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0163443720948018
Gerlitz, C., Helmond, A.	2013	The Like Economy: Social buttons and the data-intensive web	New Media & Society, 15(8): 1348-1365	https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1461444812472322
Jacobsen B.	2020	Sculpting digital voids: The politics of forgetting on Facebook	Convergence, 27(2), 357–370	https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1354856520907390
Jordan, T.	2020	The Digital Economy		Cambridge: Polity Press
Lupton D.	2020	‘Not the Real Me’: Social Imaginaries of Personal Data Profiling	Cultural Sociology, 15(1): 3-21	https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1749975520939779
Mancinelli, F.	2020	Digital nomads: freedom, responsibility and the neoliberal order	Information Technology and Tourism, 22(3): 417-437	https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40558-020-00174-2
Mason, P.	2020	Postcapitalism (video lecture)	Friedrich-Ebert- Stiftung	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3M2-8Hnde2s&t=1409s
Sharon, T.	2018	When digital health meets digital capitalism, how many common goods are at stake?	Big Data & Society, 5(2): 1- 12	https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2053951718819032
Schörpf, P. et al.		Triangular love–hate: Management and control in creative crowdworking	New Technology, Work and Employment, 32(1): 43–58	https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ntwe.12080
Snicek, N.	2016	Platform capitalism		Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press
Taylor, L.	2017	What is data justice? The case for connecting digital rights and freedoms globally	Big Data & Society, 4(2), 1- 14	https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2053951717736335
Viera Magalhães, J., Couldry, N.	2020	Giving by taking away: big tech, data colonialism and the reconfiguration of social good	International Journal of Communication, 15: 343–362	http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/107516/
Wajcman, J.	2019	How Silicon Valley sets time	New Media & Society, 21(6): 1272–1289	https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1461444818820073
Woods, H. S.		Asking more of Siri and Alexa: feminine persona in service of surveillance capitalism	Critical Studies in Media Communication, 35(4): 334-349	https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15295036.2018.1488082