

TELECOM POLICY ANALYSIS

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Tuesday 6:00–8:50 pm, 191 CAS, <http://www.angel.msu.edu>
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Walk-in office hours: Tu 2–3, W 10–11 (other times by appointment)

Background and objectives

These are exciting times to deal with telecom policy issues! In December 2010, the FCC adopted rules intended to preserve network neutrality. The same month, the FTC announced exploring a “Don Not Track” initiative that would increase privacy protection online (but also reduce the ability of online businesses to create innovative sustainable business models). In response to concerns about the country’s poor broadband access compared to peer countries, Congress authorized a significant program to support broadband roll-out to rural areas and instructed the FCC to develop a National Broadband Plan, which is currently being implemented.

However, it is not only government that is involved in drafting and enforcing the rules of the game for the information and communication industries. Private players (industry associations, civic interest groups, and users) are increasingly involved in shaping these rules also. In the most advanced segments of ICT industries, such forms of self-regulation and co-regulation (involving both the government and private stakeholders) are becoming increasingly important. Both public policies and private arrangements are forms of “governance”.

This course is designed to provide a roadmap of ICT governance, the public policies and private arrangements that affect the information and communication industries. I strongly believe that any professional in the field should be aware of these rules of the game. We will develop a systematic framework to compare alternative policy options and apply it to understand the practical impact of actual policy choices on individual stakeholders — including established and new businesses as well as consumers — and on society at large.

During the 1980s and 1990s a strong belief emerged that fully deregulated markets would be most conducive to harnessing the innovation potential embedded in the new technologies. More recently, however, in the wake of the dot.com crash of 2000 and the more recent financial meltdown, the observation of persistent monopolistic power across the information and communication industries, and a strong movement to privatize and fragment the commons created by the internet, new doubts as to the overall benefits of this laissez faire approach have risen.

Such a rethinking has been underway for some time among researchers and some public interest groups but is now gaining additional political momentum. All stakeholders are affected by the outcome of the redefinition of the legal and regulatory environment of the ICT sector and will be affected by the solutions pending policy debates, which we will examine in this course.

After completion of this course, you should

- have a solid understanding of the key issues of information and communication policy (ICP) and why they are relevant for a professional in the field
- be able to apply these insights to specific problems facing firms in the industry
- understand importance and necessity of ICP for the industry
- be cognizant of the goals of ICP and the trade-offs existing between these goals
- understand the means of ICP and their comparative strengths and weaknesses
- know the processes and institutions of ICP
- have an overview of how different nations outside of the US have addressed similar challenges

- be able to systematically analyze emerging issues of information and communications policy and their likely impacts
- grasp the methods and approaches of telecommunications policy analysis

We will achieve these goals by combining different instructional techniques, including lectures, discussion, team assignments, and policy laboratories. The course website is an integral part of the learning experience and a gateway to many additional resources.

This semester, I am working with the Wikimedia Foundation to hopefully provide you with a more rewarding course experience. You are part of a select group of student who will not only learn about U.S. communications policy but also contribute to the public good by helping to improve the resources available in the public domain. Many of the assignments will be related to Wikipedia and the communications policy content available on the site.

Requirements

Mastering the issues will require your active participation. In order to succeed in the course you will have to do the following:

- Study the required readings before class (from the textbook or the electronic resources accessible via ANGEL).
- Participate in class discussions, including in-class case study work.
- Diligently work on the homework assignments (many related to Wikipedia).
- Work in small teams on group projects in class and in between classes. More details will be given in class.
- Improve existing entries on communications policy on Wikipedia
- Author a new entry on a communications policy topic as a final term paper (or significantly expand an existing stub).

Grading

Your grade will be determined based on your performance in the following areas: participation, homework assignments, team projects, and policy papers.

Component	Points	Percent of grade
Participation in class and Wikipedia discussions	100	10
Wikipedia preparatory exercises (create account, etc.)	100	10
Two case study homework assignments	200	20
Wikipedia analysis, presentation and improvement of an existing entry	200	20
Wikipedia peer review of work of other students	100	10
Wikipedia new entry, including outline and draft presentation in class (or significant improvement of stub)	300	40
Total	1,000	100

The final grade will be determined according to the following scale:

900-1000 points	4.0	700-749 points	2.0
850-899 points	3.5	650-699 points	1.5
800-849 points	3.0	600-649 points	1.0
750-799 points	2.5	0-599 points	0.0

Course materials

Required

Nuechterlein, J. E. and Weiser, P. J. (2007) *Digital Crossroads: American Telecommunications Policy in the Internet Age*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, make sure to get the paperback edition (hardback was published 2005).

Online materials for TC 850, links to which will be provided as we proceed through the semester.

Background and advanced readings

If you need to brush up your basic knowledge of the basics of media and communications law, you may want to look at a text in media or communications law, such as W. Overbeck, *Major Principles of Media Law*, 2011 edition (this is a good text but, unfortunately pricey, earlier editions will also serve the purpose of providing you with an overview).

I will also provide hints to more advanced readings throughout the course and highly recommend that you will explore some of them, for example, in preparation for your term paper. Moreover, I will provide links to resources on the internet that will both provide introductory overviews and access to debates on current issues of ICP.

Furthermore, I encourage you to read the business press (e.g., the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Financial Times*, or the business section of the *New York Times*) and to regularly visit the websites of electronic news services such as cnet (<http://news.com.com/>) or ZDNet (<http://news.com.com/>) and of major ICP institutions, such as the FCC (<http://www.fcc.gov>) and the Federal Trade Commission (<http://www.ftc.gov>).

Course schedule

The following timetable is a work plan for our progress through the material. It may be subject to minor modifications. The authoritative plan for each week as well as the assignments will be posted on ANGEL.

Date	Topics, readings, and assignments
Jan 11	Welcome, overview, introduction <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Case Study: Getting broadband to the people2. Introduction to Wikipedia component of the course3. Complete first Wikipedia assignment (review of “Five Pillars”) by 1/18
PART I: FOUNDATIONS	
Jan 18	Issues, institutions and players <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read Overbeck, <i>The American legal system</i>, 2005, ch. 12. Presentation by Wikipedia Campus Ambassador3. Complete second Wikipedia assignment (set up account, etc.) by 1/25
Jan 25	Principles of policy formation and evaluation <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read Gupta, <i>Analyzing Public Policy</i>, 2001, ch. 1-32. Complete Wikipedia assignment (find and critique relevant articles) by 2/1
PART II: POLICIES GOVERNING PLATFORMS	
Feb 1	Common carriers and broadband policy <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read Nuechterlein and Weiser, <i>Digital Crossroads</i>, 2007, ch. 2+3

	2. Case study: broadband policy
Feb 8	Broadband policy (continued) 1. Read Nuechterlein and Weiser, Digital Crossroads, 2007, ch. 4 2. Group presentations: Wikipedia on broadband policy issues
Feb 15	Mobile and wireless communications policy 1. Read Nuechterlein and Weiser, Digital Crossroads, 2007, ch. 7+8 2. Case study: mobile communications policy
Feb 22	Mobile and wireless (continued) 1. Read Nuechterlein and Weiser, Digital Crossroads, 2007, ch. 7+8 2. Group presentations: Wikipedia on mobile communications policy
Mar 1	Net neutrality and Internet governance 1. Read Nuechterlein and Weiser, Digital Crossroads, 2007, ch. 5 2. Read Wu, Wireless Net Neutrality, 2007 3. Group presentations: Wikipedia on mobile communications policy
Mar 8	Spring break, no class
PART III: POLICIES GOVERNING CONTENT AND APPLICATIONS	
Mar 15	Freedom of speech and access to information 1. Read Overbeck, Major Principles of Media Law, 2009, ch. 10 2. Outline presentations of Wikipedia final project topic
Mar 22	In search of the public interest in old and new media 1. Overbeck, Major Principles of Media Law, 2009, ch. 10+11 2. Nuechterlein and Weiser, Digital Crossroads, 2007, ch. 11
Mar 29	Digital copyright and its alternatives 1. Overbeck, Major Principles of Media Law, 2009, ch. 6
PART IV: TOWARD KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY POLICIES	
Apr 5	Toward an information ethics: privacy and security 1. Overbeck, Major Principles of Media Law, 2009, ch. 5 2. Bauer & Van Eeten, Cybersecurity Policy, 2009
Apr 12	Universal service and digital literacy 1. Nuechterlein and Weiser, Digital Crossroads, 2007, ch. 10 2. Nuechterlein and Weiser, Digital Crossroads, 2007, ch. 13
Apr 19	Term project presentations Individual presentations and discussion of Wikipedia final project
Apr 26	Controlling market power: mergers, competition, and ownership policy 1. Spulber, Competition Policy in Telecommunications, 2002 2. Overbeck: Media Ownership Policy, 2009
PART V: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED	

May 3	Final case study and wrap-up (8:00-10:00 pm, in class) Individual presentations and discussion
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Important MSU policies

Dropping this course

The last day to drop this course with a 100% refund and no grade reported is February 3, 2011. The last day to drop this course without a refund and no grade reported is March 2, 2011. You may drop this course after this deadline only to correct verified errors of enrollment or because of a catastrophic event. Failing this course is not a catastrophic event. After you drop the course, make a copy of your amended schedule for verification, if needed.

Accommodations for disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who requires reasonable accommodations, please call the OPHS Disability Resource Center at 353-9642 (voice) or 355-1293 (TTY).

Religious observance

If you wish to be absent from class to observe a religious holiday, make arrangements in advance with the instructor.

Participation in a required activity

If you must miss a class to participate in an officially sanctioned athletic game or in a required activity for another course, provide the instructor with adequate advanced notice, such as the team schedule or a written authorization from the faculty member of the other course.

Academic honesty and sanctions for plagiarism

Academic honesty

Michigan State University adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades, and in the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades.

Plagiarism (from the Latin *plagiarius*, an abductor, and *plagiare*, to steal)

Plagiarism is defined as presenting another person's work or ideas as one's own. You are expected to do your own work on all assignments. According to MSU policies, students who plagiarize will be reported and registered in a central database.

If it is a first offence, you will receive a 0.0 on the assignment. However, in more serious cases you may fail the course or even be expelled from MSU.

To learn more about plagiarism and how to avoid it visit <http://globaledge.msu.edu/academy/plagiarism/> and the links provided there.

A few words about myself

I am a Professor in the Department of Telecommunication, Information Studies, and Media and also serve as the Director of Special Programs of the Quello Center for Telecommunication Management and Law. From 1993 until 1998, I directed the Institute of Public Utilities and Network Industries at the Eli Broad College of Business and from 2001 until 2009 I participated in managing the Quello Center, most recently as one of its Co-directors. My current research interests are equally split between (1) the governance of communication systems and services, (2) the business and economics of information and communication industries, and (3) the international and comparative study of governance and business strategy issues. More details on my research, publications, professional education, and consulting can be found at <http://www.msu.edu/~bauerj>.

How I can be reached

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