UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES

GS2236 Technology, Politics, Society, 15 credits

Teknologi, politik, samhälle, 15 högskolepoäng

Second Cycle

Confirmation

This course syllabus was confirmed by School of Global Studies on 2020-06-24 and was last revised on 2021-11-23 to be valid from 2022-01-17, spring semester of 2022.

Field of education: Social Sciences 100%
Department: School of Global Studies

Position in the educational system

The course is an in-depth course in the second cycle and can be studied as a single subject course.

The course can be part of the following programme: 1) Master's Programme in Global Studies (S2GLS)

Main field of studies	*Specialization*
Global Studies	A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

Entry requirements

A completed core course of 15 higher education credits in the second cycle within the field of global studies. Alternatively a completed undergraduate degree in social sciences or humanities, or the equivalent competence.

Applicants must prove their knowledge of English: English 6/English B from Swedish Upper Secondary School or the equivalent level of an internationally recognized test, for example TOEFL, IELTS, or alternatively a bachelor's degree from an education held in English.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of the course the student will be able to:

Knowledge and understanding

- discuss how technology and technological development are addressed in debates within the social sciences
- identify and explain key political concepts in discussions on technological development
- account for different theoretical perspectives in the study of socio-technical relations

Competence and skills

- identify challenges and opportunities emergent in political debates that attribute an important role to technology or technological solutions
- apply concepts and perspectives on technology/society to the study of empirical political problems
- identify and formulate adequate research problems and research questions in relation to the themes and concepts addressed in the course

Judgement and approach

- assess different approaches in the study of technology from a social science perspective
- reflect on political and ethical issues encountered in relation to the role of technology and technological development
- reflect on how different societal values can be taken into consideration in the application of technology

Course content

From contestations around large infrastructural projects to the power of algorithms; from innovations in health to experiments in geo-engineering to halt climate change: global political issues are infused with questions of technology.

What is more, we are entering an age of algorithmic governance where machines become involved in decision-making about deeply political questions about justice and liberty. Hence, the implications of advancement in science and technology for questions of how we organize society democratically are immense.

This course aims at providing students with the skills to examine critically the relationship between technology, society and (global) politics and it approaches questions including: how can we understand technology in social transformation: as an autonomous force, as a mere expression of human intent or as co-constituted in social realities? What are the main contestations that emerge around technological

development for political issues of participation, authority and freedom? What are productive ways to make use of technology for inclusion, justice and sustainability?

This course aims at familiarizing students with the main approaches to the study of technology, society and politics drawing on insights from the history of technology, science and technology studies, environmental social sciences as well as human geography. In addition, this course aims at making students identify and critically examine controversies with regard to power, authority, knowledge and participation evoked by technological development across society. In this course, students will identify contentious issues in a number of relevant themes and elucidate their political and ethical ramifications with the help of the theoretical perspectives introduced in the course.

Form of teaching

Learning activities in the course include lectures, seminars, group work and feedback workshops. The course consists of lectures, followed by discussion seminars on the main perspectives on technology, politics and society. Students are expected to have read the mandatory literature in advance. In the group work, students choose an empirical problem that has a technological component, and discuss its political and ethical dimensions.

Language of instruction: English

Assessment

Examination will take the form of active seminar participation, written assignments, group work as well as a take-home exam.

A student who has taken two exams in a course or part of a course without obtaining a pass grade is entitled to the nomination of another examiner. The student needs to contact the department for a new examiner, preferably in writing, and this should be approved by the department unless there are special reasons to the contrary (Chapter 6 Section 22 of the Higher Education Ordinance).

If a student has received a recommendation from the University of Gothenburg for special educational support, where it is compatible with the learning outcomes of the course and provided that no unreasonable resources are required, the examiner may decide to allow the student to sit an adjusted exam or alternative form of assessment.

In the event that a course has ceased or undergone major changes, students are to be guaranteed at least three examination sessions (including the ordinary examination session) over a period of at least one year, but no more than two years, after the course

has ceased/been changed. The same applies to placements and professional placements (VFU), although this is restricted to just one additional examination session.

Grades

The grading scale comprises: Pass with Distinction (VG), Pass (G) and Fail (U).
The group assignment will be graded fail or pass (U/G) and corresponds to 3 credits.
The written assignments will be marked fail or pass (U/G) and correspond to 4,5 credits.
The take-home exam is marked fail, pass or pass with distinction (U/G/VG) and corresponds to 7,5 credits.

In order to receive the grade Pass (G) on the course, the student has to get a Pass grade on all assignments. In order to receive a Pass with distinction (VG) for the whole course, the student has to get a Pass with distinction on the take-home exam essay in addition to a pass in all the other assignments.

Course evaluation

The course coordinator is responsible for systematically and regularly collecting the students' views of the course, and for making sure that the results of the evaluations in different forms are taken into consideration when developing the course.

The results of and possible changes to the course will be shared with students who participated in the evaluation and students who are starting the course.