Critical Perspectives on Law, Technology, and Society
Reading Group
Faculty of Law, The University of Cambridge

Conveners: Dr Christopher Markou (Faculty of Law) and Dr Jennifer Cobbe (Department of Computer Science and Technology)

This reading group will explore topics at the intersection of law and emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, big data, surveillance, the Internet of Things, and the future of work. Each of these poses legal and societal challenges; but to what extent are they fundamentally distinct from those faced at earlier periods of industrialisation? The materials and discussions in this reading group will require participants to grapple with how these technologies, and the paradigms they create, are impacting our lives now and into the future. We will examine how technological change interacts, challenges, subverts, and co-evolves with the law and society. Although law-led, this reading group offers an interdisciplinary survey of emerging technologies and will orient students within the ongoing discourse between law and technological change, encouraging critical perspectives that challenge traditional legal and tech orthodoxies.

Michaelmas 2018

Week One: Critical Perspectives on Technology and Society


Herbert Marcuse, ‘The New Forms of Control’ from One Dimensional Man (1964)

Leo Marx, ‘Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept’ (2010) 51 Technology and Culture 3

Zeynep Tufekci, ‘As the Pirates Become CEOs: The Closing of the Open Internet’ (2016) 145 Daedalus 1

Langdon Winner, ‘Do Artifacts Have Politics?’ (1980) 109 Daedalus 1

Week Two: The Technological Singularity


Week Three: Artificial Intelligence I (From Human Privacy to Artificial Personhood)

Peter Asaro, ‘Robots and Responsibility from a Legal Perspective’ (2007)


Privacy International, ‘Privacy and Freedom of Expression In the Age of Artificial Intelligence’ (April 2018)


Week Four: Artificial Intelligence II (Machine Learning)


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Week One: Big Data

Jose van Dijck, ‘Datafication, dataism and dataveillance: Big Data between scientific paradigm and ideology’ (2014) 12 Surveillance & Society 2
Francisco R Klauser and Anders Albrechtslund, ‘From self-tracking to smart urban infrastructures: towards an interdisciplinary research agenda on Big Data’ (2014) 12 Big Data Surveillance 2

danah boyd and Kate Crawford, ‘Critical Questions for Big Data’ (2012) 15 Information, Communication & Society


Antoinette Rouvroy and Thomas Berns, ‘Algorithmic governmentality and prospects of emancipation’ (2013) 177 Réseaux 1

Week Two: Surveilled Society


David Lyon, ‘Surveillance Society’ (2008)


C Rollet, ‘The odd reality of life under China’s all-seeing credit score system’ (Wired, 5 June 2018)

Week Three: The Digital Panopticon


David Lyon, ‘Surveillance, Snowden, and Big Data: Capacities, consequences, critique’ (2014) Big Data & Society


Week Four: Politics and the Public Sphere


Mark Leiser, ‘AstroTurfing, ‘CyberTurfing’ and other online persuasion campaigns’ (2016) 7 European Journal of Law and Technology 1


Week Five: The Internet of Things

Jat Singh and Julia Powles, ‘The internet of things - the next big challenge to our privacy’ (The Guardian, 28 July 2014)


Week Six: The Future of Work (...Or the Lack Thereof)


Week Seven: The Rule of Technology

Jill Lepore, ‘Our Own Devices – Does Technology Drive History?’ (The New Yorker, 12 May 2008)

R Brownsword, ‘In the year 2061: From Law to Technological Management’ (2015) 7 Law, Innovation and Technology 1


Week Eight: Wrap Up