

COM 597 Liberation Technology
WINTER 2014
Monday and Wednesday 10:30am-12:20pm
CMU 242

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Office hours in CMU 340-E Tuesday 12:30pm-2pm and by appointment

Description: This course will examine the role of information and communication technologies on beneficial outcomes

There are numerous claims from scholars, policymakers, the news media, etc. that various technologies bring or cause “good” things – democracy, wellbeing, economic benefits, social support, empowerment, collective action, education, social capital, etc. but as scholars, we need to understand the mechanisms by which these “good” things occur or perhaps do not.

Liberation technology is “... any form of information and communication technology (ICT) that can expand political, social, and economic freedom. In the contemporary era, it means essentially the modern, interrelated forms of digital ICT—the computer, the Internet, the mobile phone, and countless innovative applications for them, including “new social media” such as Facebook and Twitter.” (Diamond, 2010, p. 70)

“Looking at the seemingly endless examples of social innovation, one might easily assume that cyber-technologies possess a special power, that they are “technologies of liberation.” No other mode of communication in human history has facilitated the democratization of communication to the same degree. No other technology in history has grown with such speed and spread so far geographically in such a short period of time... Yet some observers have noted that the very same technologies which give voice to democratic activists living under authoritarian rule can also be harnessed by their oppressors... In fact, the picture is far more nuanced and must be qualified in several ways. Communications technologies are neither empty vessels to be filled with products of human intent nor forces unto themselves, imbued with some kind of irresistible agency. They are complicated and continuously evolving manifestations of social forces at a particular time and place.” (Deibert & Rohozinski, 2010, p. 43-44).

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- 1) Identify concepts, literatures, topics, and both academic and policy debates related to the effect of technology on particular outcomes and locate their own research interests within these debates;
- 2) Use the theoretical basis and frameworks developed in this course to ground further research, prepare for qualifying exams, and do continued coursework in the technology & society area in communication or within their home departments;
- 3) Present empirical studies and lead a discussion with their peers;
- 4) Develop an extended paper on a topic of their choice related to course material; and
- 5) Begin independent, professional-quality research in the area of technology & society.

First, an overarching question in this class will be: **what is “good” and for whom? And who defines it?**

Often the outcomes of increased technology use are jumbled together without conceptualization or operationalization. One of the purposes of this class will be to closely examine what authors mean when they describe beneficial outcomes of technology.

Secondly, in this class, we will use “The Cube” to structure our exploration of the effect of technology. We will look at three dimensions of effects:

- **the process/mechanism by which technology may influence people (at different levels)**

When authors argue that technology causes a particular social benefit, *how* does it occur? A mechanism is a specific relationship through which one thing causes another, allowing answers to questions of “why” something happens beyond mere description. Mechanisms can be thought of as a theoretical building block. Mechanisms allow for a more nuanced examination of individual and societal level phenomena. Technology may **instigate** effects (which are often short-term) or based on a more long-term **socializing** process. You can think of this as single-exposure, typically immediate effects vs. effects based on an accumulation of exposure.

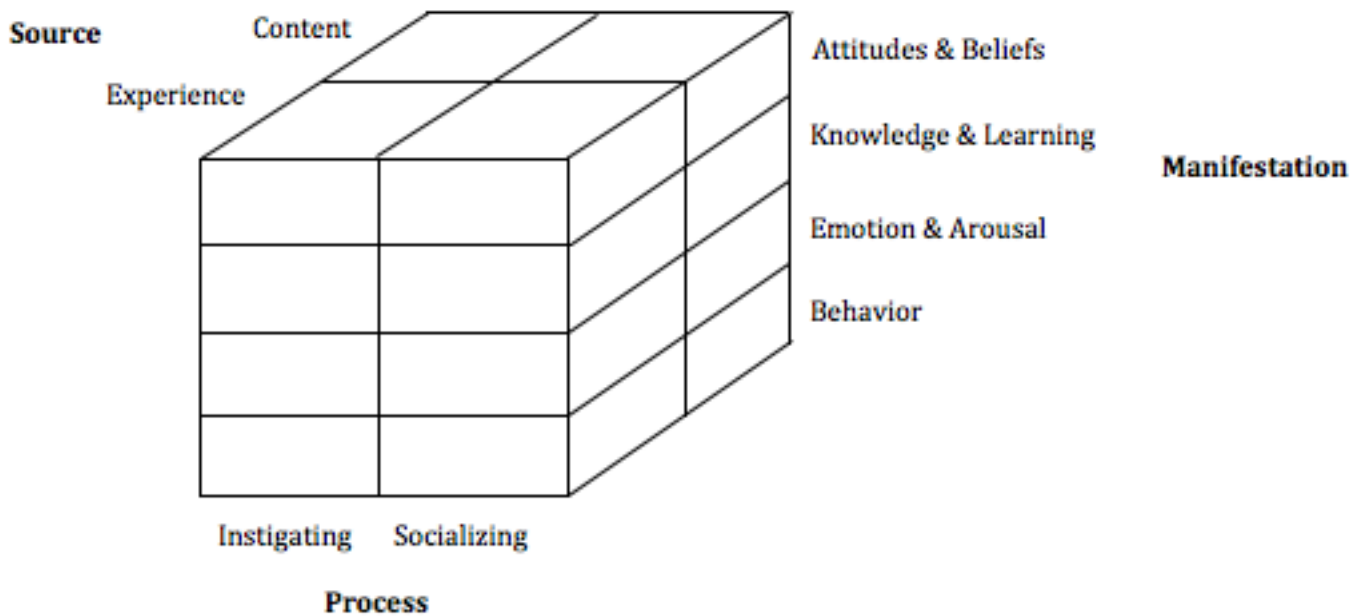
- **the source of those effects**

We are also going to consider two sources as the agents of effects: (1) content and (2) the experience of use.

By “experience of use” this can mean many things, essentially anything other than the content. So, the effect is not due to content, instead it is due to things like the social or physical context of use (who do you use it with, what you are doing while using; screen size; modality effects – which type of technology you use; audience characteristics; and time displacement: effects stemming from using technology rather than doing other things like hanging out with your friends, for example).

- **manifestation/form of effects**

We will also look at different manifestations or types of effects: for example: the effect of technology on people’s attitudes and beliefs, knowledge and learning, emotion and arousal, and behavior.



For each reading, students should come prepared to discuss:

- what is the conceptual and operational definition of the outcome
- how the authors portray outcomes as good or beneficial or liberating
- the suggested processes/mechanisms between the technology and the outcome (and is it instigating (short term) or socializing (long-term))
- how the study does (or does not) fit into the cube

Students will sign up for one-two class periods (depending on the number of students enrolled) to lead the discussion of the readings and provide a handout to the class. This will include a 10-15 minutes summary of the key points of the assigned readings of the day (include key points in the handout as well), one or two key

critiques (remember, critiques are not necessarily critical), and one or two questions to begin the discussion. Please upload your handout to Canvas at least an hour before the class meets so everyone may access it.

Final Project

Each individual will take a concept (that was presented in class or a different “good” outcome of your choice) and

1. Explore its different conceptualizations and operationalizations through a fairly comprehensive literature review of the concept itself and the findings about it and technology (be careful to keep the different types of technology clear – mobile phones versus Internet, etc.)
2. Based on that exploration, either create a new conceptualization and potential operationalization *or* pick a winner and make an argument why it was the best/most appropriate.
3. Expand on the literature review by detailing the *mechanisms* by which the authors argue the connection between technology and a particular outcome occurs.
4. Evaluate the mechanisms proposed. Do they resonate with you? Do they hold up under closer scrutiny?
5. What are the implicit assumptions about benefit in your conceptualization?

If you have plans to study one of these concepts in your thesis or dissertation, view this as an opportunity to explore a concept and use this material later. If these concepts aren’t central to your research agenda, but you’re interested in exploring them I’m open to other possibilities for a final project *or* for a pair to work on this assignment together. However, a peer evaluation will be used for any collaboration.

You would be well-advised to select an outcome earlier in the quarter rather than later, so that during class discussions and as you’re completing the readings, you can think about your own concept.

This paper should be 25 pages, written in APA style (Times New Roman, 12 point, double spaced, 1” margins, etc.). These will be due by 10am on Friday, March 14 on Canvas. You will be expected to give a short (10 minute) presentation of your paper during the final week of class.

GRADING

Class discussion leadership	20%
Class participation	20%
Final paper presentation	20%
Final paper	40%

Schedule:

Week 1	
	M 1/6 Introduction An introduction to the course, as well as a discussion of what freedom and liberation mean more broadly. Readings: Sen, A. (1999). <i>Development as freedom</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 1 (please read before class)
	W 1/8 Theoretical arguments about technology and liberation In this class we will talk about the theoretical landscape related to technology and liberation. These are fairly dense readings, but focus mostly on the book chapters. Diamond is the

	primary theorist arguing about the influence of technology on freedoms. They think about the mechanisms of this relationship slightly differently. The Perez piece is a nice overview of the broader literature on this topic. The Selwyn piece is older but is a good overview of theories of technology and inequality – which certainly relates to liberation/freedom. Readings: Diamond, L. (2012). Liberation technology. In Larry Diamond & M. F. Plattner (Eds.), <i>Liberation technology: Social media and the struggle for democracy</i> (pp. 3–17). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. Perez, Y. V., & Ben-David, Y. (2012). Internet as freedom – does the Internet enhance the freedoms people enjoy? <i>Information Technology for Development</i>, 18(4), 293–310. doi:10.1080/02681102.2011.643203 Selwyn, N. (2002). <i>Defining the digital divide: Developing a theoretical understanding of inequalities in the information age</i>. Cardiff, UK: School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University. Retrieved from http://eprints.ioe.ac.uk/6233/
Week 2	M 1/13 Media Effects In this class session we will discuss perspectives and theories of media effects, focusing on The Cube (referenced above) as a framework for understanding how media (including technology) has different processes, experiences, and manifestations. Further, we'll talk about levels of analysis (individual, group, societal, global). The readings reflect two perspectives – affordances and manifestations – that try to explain the casual relationship between technology and particular outcomes. Readings: Earl, J., & Kimport, K. (2011). <i>Digitally enabled social change: Activism in the Internet age</i>. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Chapter 1 Farrell, H. (2012). The consequences of the Internet for politics. <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i>, 15(1), 35–52. doi:10.1146/annurev-polisci-030810-110815 W 1/15 Attitudes and Beliefs – Political This class will be our first slice of The Cube – effects on political attitudes and beliefs. The three pieces you will read examine the impact of the Internet (content or instigating) on attitudes (all defined differently). Two pieces look at youth and one in a Middle Eastern context. For each reading (these and all future readings), come prepared to discuss: - what is the conceptual and operational definition of the outcome - how the authors portray outcomes as good or beneficial or liberating - the suggested processes/mechanisms between the technology and the outcome (and is it instigating (short term) or socializing (long-term)) - how the study does (or does not) fit into the cube Readings: Baumgartner, J. C. (2007). Humor on the next frontier: Youth, online political humor, and the JibJab Effect. <i>Social Science Computer Review</i>, 25(3), 319–338. doi:10.1177/0894439306295395 Yamamoto, M., & Kushin, M. J. (2013). More harm than good? Online media use and political

	disaffection among college students in the 2008 election. <i>Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication</i>, n/a–n/a. doi:10.1111/jcc4.12046 Al-Kandari, A., & Hasanen, M. (2012). The impact of the Internet on political attitudes in Kuwait and Egypt. <i>Telematics and Informatics</i>, 29(3), 245–253. doi:10.1016/j.tele.2011.10.005
Week 3	M 1/20 MLK day – no class W 1/22 Attitudes and Beliefs – Political We will continue to look at this slice of The Cube - effects on political attitudes and beliefs. These three pieces go beyond general “political attitudes” and look at perception of fairness, political support, and democratic satisfaction. Readings: Bailard, C. S. (2012). A field experiment on the Internet’s effect in an African election: Savvier citizens, disaffected voters, or both? <i>Journal of Communication</i>, 62(2), 330–344. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01632.x Tang, M., & Huhe, N. (2013). Alternative framing: The effect of the Internet on political support in authoritarian China. <i>International Political Science Review</i>, 0192512113501971–. doi:10.1177/0192512113501971 Bailard, C. S. (2012). Testing the Internet’s effect on democratic satisfaction: A multi-methodological, cross-national approach. <i>Journal of Information Technology & Politics</i>, 9(2), 185–204. doi:10.1080/19331681.2011.641495
Week 4	M 1/27 Attitudes and Beliefs – Social We will continue to look at attitudes and beliefs, but this class session will focus on a wider variety of social outcomes. Public orientation, empowerment, and judgment of violent crimes are quite different from each other, but we will discuss similarities in these studies as well. Readings: Ekström, M., Olsson, T., & Shehata, A. (2013). Spaces for public orientation? Longitudinal effects of Internet use in adolescence. <i>Information, Communication & Society</i>, 1–16. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2013.862288 Shirazi, F. (2011). Information and communication technology and women empowerment in Iran. <i>Telematics and Informatics</i>, 29(1), 1–11. doi:10.1016/j.tele.2011.02.001 Lee, K. M., Peng, W., & Klein, J. (2010). Will the experience of playing a violent role in a video game influence people’s judgments of violent crimes? <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>, 26(5), 1019–1023. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2010.03.002 W 1/29 Knowledge and Learning – Political The next outcome set is knowledge and learning, and for this class we will look at political knowledge outcomes. With a new part of The Cube, we will spend some time talking about measuring knowledge and learning, an interesting subfield in itself. The first piece is an overview and the second piece is a broader study of political knowledge in a Middle Eastern

	context. Readings: Mitchelstein, E., & Boczkowski, P. J. (2010). Online news consumption research: An assessment of past work and an agenda for the future. <i>New Media & Society</i>, 12(7), 1085–1102. doi:10.1177/1461444809350193 Wagner, K. M., & Gainous, J. (2013). Digital uprising: The Internet revolution in the Middle East. <i>Journal of Information Technology & Politics</i>, 10(3), 261–275. doi:10.1080/19331681.2013.778802
Week 5	M 2/3 Knowledge and Learning – Social Social knowledge and learning outcomes are the next slice of The Cube. Three of these studies look at learning outcomes and one on ability. Three of the studies focus on mobile phones and one on video games, thus moving away from most of the previous studies we’ve looked at that used the Internet as the medium. Readings: Squire, K., & Dikkers, S. (2012). Amplifications of learning: Use of mobile media devices among youth. <i>Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies</i>, 18(4), 445–464. doi:10.1177/1354856511429646 Kuznekoff, J. H., & Titsworth, S. (2013). The impact of mobile phone usage on student learning. <i>Communication Education</i>, 62(3), 233–252. doi:10.1080/03634523.2013.767917 Aker, J. C., Ksoll, C., & Lybbert, T. J. (2012). Can mobile phones improve learning? Evidence from a field experiment in Niger. <i>American Economic Journal: Applied Economics</i>, 4(4), 94–120. doi:10.1257/app.4.4.94 Ferguson, C. J., Garza, A., Jerabeck, J., Ramos, R., & Galindo, M. (2013). Not worth the fuss after all? Cross-sectional and prospective data on violent video game influences on aggression, visuospatial cognition and mathematics ability in a sample of youth. <i>Journal of Youth and Adolescence</i>, 42(1), 109–22. doi:10.1007/s10964-012-9803-6 W 2/5 Emotion and Arousal and Health Media effects of emotion and arousal (often going hand-in-hand with health) have a large body of literature. While we will talk about some of the theories of emotional and arousal, this will be merely the tip of the iceberg. Two “classic” texts about the impact of the Internet on wellbeing (an interesting concept to be sure) along with a more recent study of Facebook and wellbeing will frame our discussion of this type of effect. Readings: Valkenburg, P. M., & Peter, J. (2007). Internet communication and its relation to well-being: Identifying some underlying mechanisms. <i>Media Psychology</i>, 9(1), 43–58. doi:10.1080/15213260709336802 Kim, J., LaRose, R., & Peng, W. (2009). Loneliness as the cause and the effect of problematic Internet use: the relationship between Internet use and psychological well-being. <i>Cyberpsychology & behavior : the impact of the Internet, multimedia and virtual reality on behavior and society</i>, 12(4), 451–5. doi:10.1089/cpb.2008.0327 Liu, C.-Y., & Yu, C.-P. (2013). Can Facebook use induce well-being? <i>Cyberpsychology, behavior</i>

	and social networking, 16(9), 674–8. doi:10.1089/cyber.2012.0301
Week 6	M 2/10 Emotion and Arousal and Health The focus of this session will be on social support and social capital, concepts that are well-studied and hotly debated. Starting with an overview piece, one study will look at social capital and two will look at social support. We will discuss these concepts broadly and related to technology. Readings: Valkenburg, P. M., & Peter, J. (2009). Social consequences of the Internet for adolescents: A decade of research. <i>Current Directions in Psychological Science</i>, 18(1), 1–5. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8721.2009.01595.x Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C. W., & Lampe, C. (2011). Connection strategies: Social capital implications of Facebook-enabled communication practices. <i>New Media & Society</i>, 13(6), 873–892. doi:10.1177/1461444810385389 Trepte, S., Reinecke, L., & Juechems, K. (2012). The social side of gaming: How playing online computer games creates online and offline social support. <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>, 28(3), 832–839. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2011.12.003 Chib, A., Wilkin, H. A., & Hua, S. R. M. (2013). International migrant workers' use of mobile phones to seek social support in Singapore. <i>Information Technologies & International Development</i>, 9(4), 19–34. Retrieved from http://www.itidjournal.org/index.php/itid/article/view/1122 W 2/12 Behavior – Political The final outcome, arguably the most important, is behavioral outcomes of the effect of media. We will discuss the difficulty in reaching behavioral outcomes (and moreover measuring them). These are some of the many studies on political activity. <i>We will divide these readings between the class members.</i> What do these authors mean by participation? Involvement? Readings: Hoffman, L. H. (2012). Participation or communication? An explication of political activity in the Internet age. <i>Journal of Information Technology & Politics</i>, 9(3), 217–233. doi:10.1080/19331681.2011.650929 Bode, L., Vraga, E. K., Borah, P., & Shah, D. V. (2013). A new space for political behavior: Political social networking and its democratic consequences. <i>Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication</i>, n/a–n/a. doi:10.1111/jcc4.12048 Kruikemeier, S., van Noort, G., Vliegenthart, R., & de Vreese, C. H. (2013). Unraveling the effects of active and passive forms of political Internet use: Does it affect citizens' political involvement? <i>New Media & Society</i>. doi:10.1177/1461444813495163 De Zúñiga, H. G., Bachmann, I., Hsu, S.-H., & Brundidge, J. (2013). Expressive versus consumptive blog use: Implications for interpersonal discussion and political participation. <i>International Journal of Communication</i>, 7. Retrieved from http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/2215 Hsieh, Y. P., & Li, M.-H. (2013). Online political participation, civic talk, and media multiplexity: How Taiwanese citizens express political opinions on the Web. <i>Information, Communication & Society</i>, 1–19. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2013.833278

Week 7	M 2/17 Presidents day – no class
	W 2/19 Behavior – Political Following up on political behavioral outcomes, this session will focus on engagement with one study continuing looking at participation. Two “classic” studies will frame our discussion of two recent studies. Readings: Xenos, M., & Moy, P. (2007). Direct and differential effects of the Internet on political and civic engagement. <i>Journal of Communication</i>, 57(4), 704–718. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2007.00364.x Shah, D. V., Cho, J., Eveland, W. P., & Kwak, N. (2005). Information and expression in a digital age: Modeling Internet effects on civic participation. <i>Communication Research</i>, 32(5), 531–565. doi:10.1177/0093650205279209 Ekstrom, M., & Ostman, J. (2013). Information, interaction, and creative production: The effects of three forms of Internet use on youth democratic engagement. <i>Communication Research</i>, 0093650213476295–. doi:10.1177/0093650213476295 Sreekumar, T. T., & Vadrevu, S. (2013). Subpolitics and democracy: The role of new media in the 2011 general elections in Singapore. <i>Science Technology & Society</i>, 18(2), 231–249. doi:10.1177/0971721813489458
Week 8	M 2/24 Behavior – Political Continuing with political behavior, this session’s readings will look at political activism (another broad concept with many definitions). Readings: Yahyanejad, M., & Gheyntanhi, E. (2012). Social media, dissent, and Iran’s Green Movement. In L. Diamond & M. F. Plattner (Eds.), <i>Liberation technology: Social media and the struggle for democracy</i> (pp. 139–153). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. Mackinnon, R. (2012). China’s “Networked Authoritarianism.” In L. Diamond & M. F. Plattner (Eds.), <i>Liberation technology: Social media and the struggle for democracy</i> (pp. 78–94). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. Baldino, D., & Goold, J. (2013). Iran and the emergence of information and communications technology: The evolution of revolution? <i>Australian Journal of International Affairs</i>, 1–19. doi:10.1080/10357718.2013.840263 Pearce, K. E., & Kendzior, S. (2012). Networked authoritarianism and social media in Azerbaijan. <i>Journal of Communication</i>, 62(2), 283–298. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01633.x W 2/26 Behavior – Social Social behavior is an interesting aspect of freedom. These studies diverge from our previous as they are making larger arguments about the impact of society, yet their analysis is based on individuals. The first study looks at the impact of mobile phone on engaging with others in public. The second study similarly looks at mobile phones and conversation quality. The

	final study argues that mobile phones can engender participation in cultural events. Readings: Campbell, S. W., & Kwak, N. (2011). Mobile communication and civil society: Linking patterns and places of use to engagement with others in public. <i>Human Communication Research</i>, 37(2), 207–222. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2010.01399.x Przybylski, A. K., & Weinstein, N. (2012). Can you connect with me now? How the presence of mobile communication technology influences face-to-face conversation quality. <i>Journal of Social and Personal Relationships</i>, 30(3), 237–246. doi:10.1177/0265407512453827 Chen, W. H. (in press). A moveable feast: Do mobile media technologies mobilize or normalize cultural participation? <i>Human Communication Research</i>, x, x-x.
Week 9	M 3/3 Behavior – Economic The economic impact of technology is a popular discussion topic. As usual, we will talk about the underlying mechanisms that each author argues create a relationship between a technology and a particular economic outcome. Pay special attention to how the economic outcomes are conceptualized and measured. In this session we will look at two different societal-level economic outcomes: social inclusion and economic growth/development. All of these studies take place in a developing country context, as it is an obvious location for this sort of research and as there is a large policy discussion around the ability for technology to liberate people in developing countries, academics has focused on this as well. Readings: Chigona, W., Beukes, D., Vally, J., & Tanner, M. (2009). Can mobile Internet help alleviate social exclusion in developing countries? <i>The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries</i>, 36, 1–16. Retrieved from http://www.ejisdc.org/ojs2.../index.php/ejisdc/article/view/535 Chavula, H. K. (2012). Telecommunications development and economic growth in Africa. <i>Information Technology for Development</i>, 1–19. doi:10.1080/02681102.2012.694794 Waverman, L., Meschi, M., & Fuss, M. (2005). The impact of telecoms on economic growth in developing countries. <i>The Vodafone Policy Paper Series</i>, 2(3), 10-24. Aker, J. C., & Mbiti, I. M. (2010). Mobile phones and economic development in Africa. <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i>, 24(3), 207–232. doi:10.1257/jep.24.3.207 W 3/5 Behavior – Economic In this session we will look at the individual level economic benefits of technology. All of these studies take place in a developing country context as well. Again, pay attention to how the economic outcomes are conceptualized and operationalized. <i>We will divide these readings between the class members.</i> Readings: Sreekumar, T. T. (2011). Mobile phones and the cultural ecology of fishing in Kerala, India. <i>The Information Society</i>, 27(3), 172–180. doi:10.1080/01972243.2011.566756 Goyal, A. (2011). Developing women: Why technology can help. <i>Information Technology for Development</i>, 17(2), 112–132. doi:10.1080/02681102.2010.537252 Liew, E. J. Y., Vaithilingam, S., & Nair, M. (2013). Facebook and socio-economic benefits in the

	developing world. <i>Behaviour & Information Technology</i>, 1–16. doi:10.1080/0144929X.2013.810775 Baro, E. E., & Endouware, B. C. (2013). The effects of mobile phone on the socio-economic life of the rural dwellers in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. <i>Information Technology for Development</i>, 1–15. doi:10.1080/02681102.2012.755895 Chew, H. E., Ilavarasan, P. V., & Levy, M. R. (2013). When there's a will, there might be a way. In <i>Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development Full Papers - ICTD '13 - volume 1</i> (pp. 196–204). New York, New York, USA: ACM Press. doi:10.1145/2516604.2516605
Week 10	M 3/10 Bringing it back together; framework creation
	W 3/12 Framework creation Paper presentations

POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

- **Expectations:** All students are expected to come to class on time, having finished the assigned readings and prepared with questions, viewpoints, or examples to contribute to the discussion. Everyone should pay attention and participate fully in discussions, neither dominating nor allowing others to carry the intellectual load.
- **In-class:** During class time, please be respectful to everyone by quietly consuming your snacks and keeping your digital media use to class-related activities such viewing digital copies of the readings or taking notes.
- If something isn't working for you in the course, please come and speak to me before it is too late to do anything about them.
- **Course management site:** Course readings and communication will be in Canvas. <https://canvas.uw.edu>. This system may be new to you. If you need help, please visit: <https://depts.washington.edu/uwcanvas/help/>.
- **Academic integrity:** All students are expected to adhere to UW's academic integrity and code of conduct policies. This includes plagiarism. This is a serious topic and all assignments will be reviewed for integrity. Please familiarize yourself with these policies. <http://www.washington.edu/uaa/advising/help/academichonesty.php>
- **Accommodations:** Students with disabilities should register with UW's Disability Resources for Students Office and meet with the instructor about accommodations. <http://www.washington.edu/students/drs/>