

Political Science 4703  
*Alternative World Futures*  
Office Hours: Wed. 3-4:30; Tu. 2-5  
[steinmo@colorado.edu](mailto:steinmo@colorado.edu)

Professor Sven Steinmo  
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:00-10:50am

WEB ADDRESS: [\[L\]  
\[SEP\]](#)

This is an experimental course for me. I expect to learn as much or more from the students in this class as they will learn from me. I have not taught this course before, but I find the idea of the course fascinating. According to the course catalogue this course “aims to help students think about the future of the world in a systematic way. Focuses on alternative projections and policies dealing with major problems.” That sounds like a good place to start.

This course will be highly interactive and will demand significant student participation and involvement. My basic idea is to organize the course around the question of how the significant technological changes that are ongoing will shape the world that we live in. The centerpiece of the course will be student presentations and projects. We will begin with some basic introductions into some of the incredible technological advances that are reshaping our world (for example, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Social Media, Internet-Interconnectivity, etc.). We then explore how these technological forces are shaping and reshaping the world around us including things like education, communication, medicine, international development, international relations, work, social life, politics, elections and democracy.

The third part of the course will be dominated by student/group presentations. Groups of students will focus on particular fields or subjects that interest them (how technology is reshaping medicine, education, agriculture, elections, etc. etc.). We will have several discussions early in the course where we assign groups and pick topics. The idea here will be to allow you to focus on an area of *your* interest. Each group (4-5 students each?) will meet in and outside of class to prepare presentations. I expect to be flexible about the character and nature of these presentations (and hope to be surprised by them). But the starting point, I expect, should be a brief overview of the particular area of interest, how has technological change shaped this field up to this point and then how are the technologies that are currently online or being developed reshaping this field. Finally, what are the implications of these changes for us as citizens, consumers, workers and so forth?

I also expect to take advantage of the significant insights that can be brought to these questions through alternative media and films. We will, as an example, view several episodes of “Black Mirror” together and discuss their insights and implications. To be honest, I think that creative artists are probably better at thinking about where we are going and how our world is changing than political scientists. (We will call these viewings “Friday Films” although they will not necessarily be only Fridays, and probably not each week.)

Recommended prerequisite: PSCI 2223

#### Course Requirements:

Class participation and course presentations are a very significant part of this course. In class participation will count for 10% of the course grade. The group presentation will count for 30% of the course grade. Each student will also write a 10 page paper on the topic of her or

his presentation topic. This paper will count for 30% of the course grade. The final exam will count for 30% of the course grade.

The final exam will consist of a combination of some short answer questions and some larger essay type questions. The essay questions will be handed out to the student at least one week before the test. I will choose which question or questions the students will write on during the in-class exams. For the written essay, the students will write on the topic of their presentation. I expect that each student in the group will write a separate paper. I am, however, open to alternative suggestions. This course, after all, is an experiment.

### **Readings:**

(Note: Some readings will be posted on the class web cite. All readings are subject to change as we move through the semester. Please check WEB site weekly for current reading assignments).

There are two required texts ordered for the class (available in the bookstore):

- Alec Ross, *Industries of the Future*, Simon and Schuster, 2017
- Kevin Kelly, *The Inevitable: Understanding the 12 Technological Forces that will shape our Future*, Penguin Books, 2016

In addition to these texts we will have assigned readings drawn from internet and open access sources. These will be linked to the course syllabus on line. There will also be reading assignments directed by the student groups making presentations each week.

The majority of the required readings for this class will be found in these books. However, in order to bring other perspectives to the class readings and/or to cover materials not found in these books, we will also have readings that can be accessed through the class WEB site. To access these readings, go to the class web cite and click on the highlighted reading... identified with (ON Class WEB) <sup>[L]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

<sup>[L]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

<sup>[L]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

### **Weekly Schedule:**

**Week 1 (Aug. 28 -) Introductions and Orientation**

**(August 30 – Sept 1) - The Interconnectivity of Everything**

*Reading: Industries of the Future, Introduction. pp. 1-14.*  
*Friday film: (Black Mirror: Be Right Back)*

**Week 2 (Sept 4 - 8) - Technology and Change**

*Reading:*  
*The Inevitable, Chapters 1 + 2, pp. 9-60.*

**Week 3 (Sept. 11 - 15) – The Rise of the Robot**

*Reading: Industries of the Future, Chapter 1, “Here Come the Robots” pp. 15-43.*  
*Friday Film: (Black Mirror: Nosedive)*

**Week 4 (Sept. 18 - 22) – Artificial Intelligence vs. Human Intelligence?**

*Reading:*

*Industries of the Future, Chapter 2, “The Future of the Human Machine” pp. 44-76*  
*The Inevitable, Chapter 2, Cognifying, pp. 29-60*

Group work/planning session

**Week 5 (Sept. 25-29) - The Modern Workplace**

*Reading: Industries of the Future, Ch. 6, Geography of Future of Markets, 186-240*

**Week 6 (Oct. 4 + 6) Markets, Capitalism, and Money**

**NOTE: no class meeting Monday, October 2**

*Reading: Industries of the Future, Chapter 3, pp. 76-120.*

*Monday Film: (The Hunger Games?)*

**Week 7 (Oct. 9-13) Markets, Capitalism and Money, part 2.**

*Readings: Industries of the Future, Ch. 5, pp. 152-186.*

Group work/planning sessions

**Week 8 (Oct. 23-27) Social Life**

*Reading: The Inevitable, Chapters 6 + 7 + 9, pp. 135-193 + 211–235.*

**Week 9 (Oct. 30 - Nov. 3) Politics and Democracy in the Age of the Internet**

*Readings: Industries of the Future, Ch. 4, pp. 121 – 151.*

*Friday Film: Mad Max?*

**Week 10 (Nov. 6 - 10) Education**

*Reading: Industries of the Future, Conclusion, pp. 140-150*

*The Inevitable, Chapter 7, pp. 191*

Group work/planning sessions

**Week 11 (Nov. 13 - 15)**

- *Group Presentations*
- Readings: TBA
- 
- *No Class Friday, November 17 (have a good break)*

 **Week 12, THANKSGIVING BREAK**

### **Week 13 (Nov. 27 – December 1)**

*Group Presentations*

Readings: TBA

### **SEP: Week 14 (Dec. 4 - 8)**

Essays due in class - or before (Nov. 21)

*Group Presentations*

Readings: TBA

### **Week 15 (Dec. 11 - 15)**

*Group Presentations*

*Summing up and preparing for the Final*

No Class Readings

**Final Exam: Saturday, Dec. 16 ----- 4:30p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

#### **Accommodation for Disabilities**

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/students) ([www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/students](http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/students)). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu) for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website and discuss your needs with your professor.

#### **Religious Holidays**

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, *{{insert your procedures here}}*

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

#### **Classroom Behavior**

Faculty and students should be aware of the campus [Classroom and Course-Related Behavior policy](#) which describes examples of unacceptable classroom behavior and

provides information on how to handle such circumstances should they arise. Faculty are encouraged to address the issue of classroom behavior in the syllabus, and to understand their [professional rights and duties](#).

### **Classroom behavior**

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

### **Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation**

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. CU's Sexual Misconduct Policy prohibits sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking or related retaliation. CU Boulder's Discrimination and Harassment Policy prohibits discrimination, harassment or related retaliation based on race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct under either policy should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127. Information about the OIEC, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation can be found at the [OIEC website](#).

### **Honor Code**

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to [the academic integrity policy](#). Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, resubmission, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-735-2273). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code

Council as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).