

Second Term, Academic Year 2025-2026

## The Politics of Digital Media and AI

Time and Place: **Tuesday 15:00-17:00, Seminar room 2 and Seminar room 3**

Given by: **Kevin Munger**

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### Description

This PhD seminar explores the political dimensions of digital media and artificial intelligence (AI) through the lens of classic and contemporary theory in sociology and political science. As AI systems and digital platforms increasingly mediate political life, from public discourse and surveillance to labour, identity, and governance, it is crucial to understand their development and deployment within broader historical and structural contexts. This course situates current debates about digital technologies within enduring questions about power, authority, legitimacy, inequality, and democracy.

Central to the seminar is a focus on critical reading and discussion. Each week, students will engage with a curated selection of foundational texts and pair them with recent scholarship on algorithmic governance, platform capitalism, surveillance infrastructures, digital labour, and the sociotechnical construction of AI. The goal is to interpret digital transformations not as entirely novel phenomena but as extensions or reconfigurations of long-standing institutional dynamics and sociopolitical struggles.

We will ask: How do AI systems reproduce or obscure structures of power? What kind of publics are shaped by digital media? How do platforms reframe questions of accountability, expertise, and agency? What are the implications of predictive technologies for democratic theory? And how might classical theories of bureaucracy, rationalisation, or ideology help us better analyse digital phenomena today?

This is a reading-intensive seminar designed to build both theoretical grounding and analytical precision. Students are expected to prepare detailed notes, lead discussions, and contribute critically to seminar dialogue. No technical background is required; the emphasis is on interpretive and theoretical engagement. The course is particularly suited for students in sociology, political science, media studies, and related fields looking to examine digital technologies as both products and producers of political life.

