Economics 320 : The Digital Economy: Information Technology, Knowledge, Intellectual Property and Development

Dr. Nagla Rizk
Teaching Assistant: Karim Khalil

A. Objectives of the Course

The Digital Economy may be defined as an economy displaying higher rates of economic growth and productivity resulting from the technological revolution brought about by information and communications technologies (ICTs). These are general purpose technologies (GPTs), and as such, their utilization infiltrates to all sectors of the economy. Earlier phases of the literature focused on debates related to digital connectivity and economic growth. As digital content continues to expand, attention has shifted to scholarship on the economics of knowledge and knowledge embodied goods. Information technology products (e.g. software), music, media, books and medicines are but examples of such goods, each creating its own realm of issues that extend beyond the mere assessment of property value to encompass controversial developmental – and indeed ethical – issues related to intellectual property protection. The debate over intellectual property rights and analyzing business models on the internet have presented themselves as priority areas of concern in the digital economy.

Of high relevance are issues related to access to knowledge as an integral component of human development, especially within a globalized world developmental inequalities are persisting if not expanding and where technologies are continuously evolving.

The purpose of this course is to involve students in world issues and debates related to the Digital Economy, with an eye to the interests of developing countries and their global position in these debates. Students will engage in an analysis of the composition of – and interplay between - four major components: information technology, knowledge and human development. The course will also examine the dynamics between knowledge creation and development against the debate over intellectual property rights and the evolution of global business structures in the digital economy.

B. Teaching Method and Course Requirements

This is a seminar course. Research is an integral component and student interaction is essential.

The first part of the course involves discussion of readings that are assigned in advance. You are required to do the readings before coming to class. There will be one midterm in-class essay exam toward the middle of the semester.
The second part of the course involves a research project where students work in pairs. Each team is required to give an oral presentation of their research, to be followed by an intensive in-class peer discussion. Quite often you will be assigned ahead one reading related to the presentation topic, and/or asked to bring in material from at least one reference related to your peer’s presentation topic. After each presentation, one team will provide a written commentary summarizing the class discussion and adding their suggestions on how to further develop the paper. The researchers will take this into consideration as they develop their research into a final written paper which addresses student comments and incorporates suggestions.

An excel sheet entitled “Course Schedule” will include the course calendar class by class as well as the schedule of presentations, presenters and commentators.

A list of suggested research topics will be posted early in the semester. You are required to discuss your topic with me beforehand. In the meantime, please contact Karim Khalil to reserve a slot for your presentation as soon as possible.

Grade Distribution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation &amp; participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm- In class essay</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Reaction paper (short form)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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D. Readings

A reading list is attached. As much as possible, you will have access to the readings which you are required to do before coming to class.

E. Office Hours

Office Hours: Thurs 12-1.30 pm and by appointment
WHERE? Dean’s Suite

F. Email Policy

In addition to office hours, please use the Blackboard to contact me. I will check email twice: Monday and Thursday (10-11).