ICT and Development

Academic Year: 2016-17, Hilary Term
Day and Time: Weeks 1-4 and 6-9, Tuesdays 14:00 - 16:00
Location: TBC

Course Providers
Professor Mark Graham, Oxford Internet Institute, mark.graham@oii.ox.ac.uk
Mr Nicolas Friederici
Mr Alex Wood

Background
This course will introduce students to the debates and practices surrounding the uses of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) with a focus on the Global South. It will draw on resources from Anthropology, Development Studies, Economics, Geography, and History in order to examine the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that underpin development - as a practice, as a subject of research, and as a discourse. The course will also draw heavily on case-studies in order to ground theory in practice and will introduce students to a range of projects that have employed ICTs as a solution to problems in Africa, Asia and the Americas.

ICTs have the power to fundamentally transform the economic, social and political relationships in poorer parts of our planet. However, potentials often do not translate into realities, and it is important to be aware of not only the promises, but also the perils of the transformative nature of communication technologies. As such, this course will provide an opportunity to reflect on local appropriateness, social inclusion and the range of arguments for and against any ICT for development project in a variety of contexts.

Course Objectives
This course will expose students to some of the most innovative ICTD solutions to economic, social and political challenges in the Global South. Students will be familiarised with a variety of theoretical movements in development studies. Through detailed case studies in weeks 6-8, students will be exposed to a wide range of methods that are employed to study ICTD projects. Ultimately, students will also be encouraged to critically examine the notion of development, how it can be achieved, and whose needs it meets best.

Learning Outcomes
Upon course completion students will:

- Have a familiarity with key debates in ICTD
- Have a sophisticated understanding of the potential for the internet and other ICTs to alter the practice of development in the Global South.
- Be able to formulate well-grounded research questions on ICTD topics.
- Be able to link development theory and ICTD practice.
Teaching Arrangements
There will be eight weekly two hour classes which will cover theory and case-studies. The classes will meet in weeks 1-4 and 6-9 of Hilary term and consist of lectures and discussion. Eight topics will be covered: (1) Uneven development and the origins of ICTD; (2) Development theory; (3) Critiques of ICTD; (4) Development in the Network Society; (5) ICTs as interventions for social development; (6) market creation, expansion and inclusion through ICTs; (7) knowledge economies, technology entrepreneurship and innovation; and (8) digital labour.

Note
Students should note that over the course of the year, small changes may be made to the content, dates or teaching arrangements set out in this reading list, at the course provider's discretion. These changes will be communicated to students directly and will be noted on the internal course information website.

Summative Assessment
Students will be assessed through a final essay that is no longer than 5000 words which must be submitted via Weblearn by 12 noon of Monday of Week 1 of Trinity term (24 April). The essay will cover one of the course topics, and students will choose a topic in consultation with the course tutor in advance. The essay should be clearly related to the topics of the course.

Formative Assignment
Each student will be required to give one ten minute presentation on a specific aspect of the session topic or to review the argument of one of the books under the additional readings for each session topic. Details of these presentations will be agreed in Week 2.

Students will also be required to write one short (advised length: 1500-3000 words) essay on any of the 8 topics covered. This essay will provide a means for students to obtain feedback on the progress they have achieved.

Submission of Summative Assignments
The summative assignment for this course is due on Monday of Trinity Term Week 1 (24 April) by 12.00pm and should be submitted electronically via the Assignment Submission WebLearn Site. The assignment should also be submitted electronically by 5:00 pm on the same day to teaching@oii.ox.ac.uk. If anything goes wrong with your submission, email teaching@oii.ox.ac.uk immediately. In cases where a technical fault that is later determined to be a fault of the Weblearn system (and not a fault of your computer) prevents you submitting the assessment on time, having a time stamped email message will help the Proctors determine if your assessment will be accepted. Please note that you should not wait until the last minute to submit materials since Weblearn can run slowly at peak submission times and this is not considered a technical fault.

Full instructions on using WebLearn for electronic submissions can be found on Plato under General Information. There is also an FAQ page on the Assignment Submission WebLearn Site.

Please note that work submitted after the deadline will be processed in the standard manner and, in addition, the late submission will be reported to the Proctors' Office. If a student is concerned that they will not meet the deadline they must contact their college office or examinations school for advice. For further information on submission of assessments to the examinations school please refer to http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/submission/. For details on the regulations for late and non-submissions please refer to the Proctors website at https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/proctors/examinations/candidates/.

Any student failing this assessment will need to follow the rules set out in the OII Examining Conventions regarding re-submitting failed work.
Key Readings

A reading list is given below for each class. Those items marked with an asterisk (*) are essential reading and MUST be read by all students in preparation for the class. Items which are not marked with an asterisk are recommended readings.

Week 1: Uneven Development and the Origins of ICTD

What is development? In this topic we will closely reflect on the variety of ways in which development can be understood and trace the history of ICTD. While traditionally a variety of economic measurements have been used, notions of ‘developed’ and ‘underdeveloped’ places can also incorporate a range of environmental, social, and political elements. We will additionally engage with the objectives of ICTD. Development can be seen as a desire to bring about positive economic, social and political change in less privileged parts of the world or, alternatively, an external implementation of new forms of power-relationships. Finally, we will reflect on the two forms of unevenness that drive ICT projects: (1) unevenness in ‘development’; and (2) digital divides.


Week 2: Development Theory

It is important to become familiar with the variety of development theories that frame ICTD projects and plans. This topic will therefore offer a close look at some of the major movements in development. Dependency, modernisation, structuralism, socialism, neo-Marxism and neoliberalism will all be discussed within the context of international development.

  - Chapter 2: The Five Stages of Growth--A Summary, pp. 4-16 (http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/ipe/rostow.htm)
Week 3: Critiques of ICTD

In recent years powerful critiques have been raised against mainstream development theory and practice. It is thus important to be aware of these alternate approaches. This topic will review the most important feminist, postcolonialist, and poststructuralist critiques. Students will be encouraged to reflect on issues of power, social inclusion and local appropriateness as they relate to a range of ICTD projects.


Week 4: Development in the Network Society

Information technologies are often promoted as an essential development strategy in both rich and poor countries due to their ability to alter economic connections and shape economic space. This topic will allow us to take a close look at the potentials for economic change in the globalised economy by focusing on digital divides, value chain disintermediation and e-commerce within the context of ICTD. The session will examine some of the dynamics of digitally-driven production as well as the opportunities and tensions that arise from non-proximate interactions in order to allow us to carefully consider the various ways in which the internet can influence the global positionalities of economic actors. Examples from both the Global North and South will be used in this session.

  o Chapter 8: *The paradox of a “double-edged geography*, pp. 174-198
  o Chapter 3: *Tangled Webs*, pp. 51-74
  o Chapter 4: *Technological Change*, pp. 75-108
  o Chapter 14: ‘Capturing Value’ within *Global Production Networks*, pp. 429-453
  o Chapter 16(part of): *Winning and Losing*, pp. 429-453, 492-521


**Week 5: BREAK**

For weeks 6-9, the course will examine some key assumptions that underlie different focus areas of ICTD. Each week, the class will discuss (1) the implied view of the poor, (2) the implied view of development, and (3) the implied view of technology.

**Week 6: ICTs as interventions for social development**

There are strong links between measures of development and social development policies (in education, health, poverty, gender) and many of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals revolve around these core issues. This session will focus on how pressing social issues have been conceptualised within mainstream development, and the variety of technical solutions that have been proposed to meet social development goals. We consider social development projects critically. For all their good intentions, projects can often embed assumptions or power that lead to less than ideal outcomes. Particular attention will be paid to the success and failures of the application of mobile phone technology as means to achieve social inclusion and development goals.

- View of the poor: poor as passive objects of development, users of technology, informants for interventions
- View of development: development can be designed and created by organizations and governments
- View of technology: technology as an intervention with “impact”
- Subthemes, topics: health, education, e-government
- Theory & debates: social shaping, use, participation, resistance

Note: Required readings will be identified at the beginning of the term.

**Readings**


• Blaya, J.A., Fraser, H.S.F. and Holt, B., 2010. E-Health Technologies Show Promise in Developing Countries”. *Health Affairs* 29, 244–251.


• Kleine, D., 2010. ICT4WHAT?—Using the choice framework to operationalise the capability approach to development”. *Journal of International Development* 22, 674–692.


• Chapter 3: *Information and Communication in Development practices*, pp. 76-124.

Public sector reform:


  o Chapters 1 & 2


**Week 7: Market creation, expansion and inclusion through ICTs**
Theories and practice of development are changing. Problems of poverty and marginalisation previously seen from the perspective of social inclusion are now recast as market failure. A lack of access to markets and an absence of economic transparency are seen as the fundamental barriers to development, where development will be driven as markets are created, supported or grown.

This session will critically examine some of the ways in which ICTs has been said to alter local information systems and markets of low-income groups and drive development. In addition to overarching readings, the class will explore three themes- rural market information, financial inclusion, and low-income groups as consumers.

- View of the poor: participants in markets
- View of development: functioning markets alleviate poverty
- View of technology: facilitator of markets and information flows
- Subthemes, topics: mobile money, market information systems, information in supply chains, low-income consumption, telecenters, physical outposts of information systems (M-Pesa vendors, extension agents, eSoko, eChoupal kiosks, etc.)
- Theory & debates: market-driven development, information asymmetries, re-intermediation, positionality

Note: Required readings will be identified at the beginning of the term.

Readings


Rural market information:


Financial inclusion & mobile money:

Bottom of the pyramid & low income consumption:
  - Chapters 1 & 2

**Week 8: Knowledge economies, technology entrepreneurship and innovation**
With the growth of connectivity, lower income countries are beginning to look towards new service industries and knowledge economies to spur development. ICTs and the internet are seen as central to the transformation of economies that move away from reliance on agriculture and extractive industries and towards a focus on the quaternary and quinary sectors. This session explores new economic activities that have inspired hopes and aspirations across the Global South. Technology entrepreneurship and innovation are particular points of emphasis. The vision is simple: a person’s cognitive potential does not depend on where they are born, and the internet has flattened the world, so why would low-income nations not be able to catch up with the Global North? The class will critically examine the assumptions behind such aspirational visions, and identify the barriers that remain. Who is responsible for development under the paradigm of entrepreneurship? What impacts do the knowledge economy, entrepreneurship, and innovation have? Are lower income groups able to participate?

- View of the poor: the poor (or not-so-poor!) as agents of change, self-responsible
- View of development: local and grassroots innovation as a driver of development, endogenous growth
- View of technology: technology as innovation, technology as enabler of innovation and entrepreneurship
- Theory & debates: concept and visions of entrepreneurship, high-growth entrepreneurship vs. necessity entrepreneurship, inclusive innovation, innovation for development

**Note:** Required readings will be identified at the beginning of the term.

**Readings**
Week 9: Digital labour and development

Does ICT facilitated labour have the potential to aid development? The internet is seen as providing a way to boost economic activity in low-income countries by enabling workers to directly connect into the global economic system. In doing so workers are held to overcome the time-space barriers and national boundaries which have traditionally constrained job creation and entrepreneurial endeavour. This session will critically assess the potential for ICT facilitated labour to benefit both workers and governments in the Global South. We will develop a materialist account of supposedly ‘immaterial’ labour. Issues of job quality, casualization, informality, value capture and bargaining power will be considered and digital labour embedded within a wider context of the global third wave of labour commodification.
• View of the poor: the poor as a globalized workforce
• View of development: employment as a driver of development
• View of technology: global mediator and connector

Readings

