LUISS

University - Rome

Digital Platforms: Governance, Regulation & Society

Summer Program - 2023

Draft Syllabus 2022/23, based on the previous editions

General Information

- Credits: 4 ECTS (one-week program)
- Hours: 28
- Academic Coordinators: Prof. Filiberto E. Brozzetti
- E-mail: fbrozzetti@luiss.it
- Price (with accommodation): € 1,690
- Price (without accommodation): € 1,290

Course Description

Digital platforms are ubiquitous. Nowadays they are present in every single aspect of our lives from shopping (e.g. Amazon) to online meetings (e.g. Zoom), from convenient food deliveries (e.g. Deliveroo) to the search for love online (e.g. Tinder). Social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) have reshaped the way in which individuals live, learn, consume, vote, and behave. However, for the past ten years, digital platforms have changed our economy, society, and politics, often in opaque ways.

This program aims to offer an introduction to the legal, governance and societal aspects of digital platforms. It starts by explaining what platforms are, how their business models work, and why Big Tech platforms are particularly influential. The course offers an interdisciplinary overview of the fundamentals of platforms economics, regulation, governance and politics.

Furthermore, this course seeks to introduce students to the complexities of the regulation, governance, politics and societal implications of digital platforms through four case studies: (i) the influence of digital platforms on the dissemination of information and its impact in the context of elections and crisis situations (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic); (ii) the platform economy (e.g. sharing-economy platforms like Airbnb and gig-economy platforms like Deliveroo), the regulation of public values (e.g. affordability of housing, livability of residential neighborhoods) and discrimination practices; (iii) social media influencers, the regulation of advertising, and consumer protection of vulnerable consumers; and (iv) online dating platforms, vulnerable platform users (e.g. seniors) and data protection policies and regulation.

Course Prerequisites

None

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

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

- understand various concepts related to digital platforms, their key actors, and how they operate (e.g. platform, multi-sided market, algorithms, social media and social media influencer);
- give examples of the most relevant digital platforms and how they have reshaped society;
- explain the role of social media platforms in politics;
- define and distinguish between misinformation, 'fake news' and disinformation;
- identify the challenges pertaining to the regulation of digital platforms and more generally, Big Tech (e.g. liability, economic power and discrimination);
- identify some of the recent international policies and EU regulatory initiatives regarding the regulation of digital platforms;
- reflect upon the broader political and societal implications of the 'platformization' of society;

- discuss different solutions for the development of strategies to counteract the power of large digital platforms in society, economy and politics;
- understand digital consumer behavior;
- apply digital marketing planning principles;
- understand the difference between strategy, objectives and tactics in digital marketing planning;
- comprehend the various components in the digital marketing toolbox and how to use them in an integrated digital marketing plan;
- comprehend the various social media tools and the benefits that they can offer to both consumers and organizations.

Course Grading

Grading of the three-week program is based on a number of components weighted as follows:

- 50% exam
- 40% group projects (in-class exercises)
- 10% class participation

Luiss University does not offer mere Pass/Fail grades or Incompletes, but the following grading system is applied:

Luiss grades	Definition	US grading system*
30 e lode	Excellent	A+
30		A
29	Very good	A-
28	Good	B+
27		B
26	Satisfactory	B-
25		C+
24		C
23	Pass	C-
22		D+
21		D
20/19/18		D-
<18	Fail	F

*Students are responsible for understanding the Luiss University grading system and their home institution's minimum grade requirement for the transfer of credit. Please note that only grades equal to or greater than 18 will be recorded and reported on the official transcript.
Students who obtain a final grade of less than 18 (F) will receive a declaration, issued by the Summer University Office, reporting that outcome.

It is up to students, before their departure, to check with their home university as to how the Italian grades will be converted in their home university grades.

Student Assessment

The exam will consist of a multiple-choice section and/or some essay questions (max. 200 words per question) concerning the main topics of the course.

Poor spelling, grammar or terminological imprecisions may have an impact on the final grade.

The exam dates CANNOT be changed for any reason, so students must organize their personal schedule accordingly.
NB: Students with learning disabilities who may need special provisions during exams are required to contact Luiss Summer University staff beforehand.

Class Participation

Speaking up in class will be highly encouraged and welcomed. It will be expected that students actively listen to their classmates, pay attention and participate in the class through reading assignments, doing homework and contributing to the overall class environment.

Students will be evaluated based on their ability to understand and apply all acquired knowledge to class/team discussions. Each student will be expected to provide opinions and feedback, and to challenge the instructor's and other students' assumptions in a respectful manner. A correct, active and responsible participation is highly recommended as otherwise the final grade will be strongly affected.

Teaching Methodology

The lessons will reflect a multi-methodological approach:

- A balanced combination of various teaching techniques including lectures, discussions and group work, will be implemented.
- Morning sessions will be devoted to lectures with in-class slides introducing students to the specific topics. During lectures, students will be encouraged to discuss the topics presented.
- Afternoon sessions will include group work aimed at applying the knowledge acquired.
- Students are expected to take notes during classes and participate actively in discussions and exercises. The use of laptops in class is discouraged. It has been scientifically proven that writing by hand facilitates the memorization of information.

Course readings/resources

Learning materials will be provided in class for free. Buying books or any other teaching materials is not compulsory. All lectures include a perfect blend of applied knowledge, case histories and insights from consulting projects that are perfectly integrated into the traditional business models and frameworks found in articles from top economics and marketing journals.

Some of the readings used during the course:

- Van Dijck, José and Poell, Thomas, Understanding Social Media Logic (12 August 2013), Media and Communication, Vol. 1, Issue 1, pp. 2-14, 2013, available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2309065
- Gillespie, Tarleton and Gillespie, Tarleton, The Politics of 'Platforms' (1 May 2010), New Media & Society, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2010, available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=1601487

- Ezrachi, Ariel and Stucke, Maurice E., Online Platforms and the EU Digital Single Market (16 October 2015), University of Tennessee Legal Studies Research Paper No. 283, available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2677267 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2677267
- Busch, Christoph and Schulte-Nölke, Hans and Wiewiórowska-Domagalska, Aneta and Zoll, Fryderyk, The Rise of the Platform Economy: A New Challenge for EU Consumer Law? (15 February 2016). Christoph Busch et al., The Rise of the Platform Economy: A New Challenge for EU Consumer Law, 5 (2016) Journal of European Consumer and Market Law 3 (Publisher: C. H. Beck), available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2754100
- Bietti, Elettra, A Genealogy of Digital Platform Regulation (3 June 2021), available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3859487 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3859487
- Liesbet Van Acker, 'C-390/18 – The CJEU Finally Clears the Air(bnb) Regarding Information Society Services', (2020), 9, Journal of European Consumer and Market Law, Issue 2, pp. 77-80, https://kluwerlawonline.com/journalarticle/Journal+of+European+Consumer+and+Market+Law/9.4/EuCML2020015
- Busch, Christoph, The Sharing Economy at the CJEU: Does Airbnb Pass the 'Uber Test'? – Some Observations on the Pending Case C-390/18 – Airbnb Ireland (14 August 2018), 7 Journal of European Consumer and Market Law 172-174 (2018), available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3231505
- Goanta, Catalina and Ranchordas, Sofia, The Regulation of Social Media Influencers: An Introduction (20 September 2019). 'The Regulation of Social Media Influencers: An Introduction' in C. Goanta and S. Ranchordas (eds), The Regulation of Social Media Influencers (Edward Elgar, 2020, forthcoming), University of Groningen Faculty of Law Research Paper No. 41/2019, available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3457197 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3457197
- De Gregorio, Giovanni and Goanta, Catalina, The Influencer Republic: Monetizing Political Speech on Social Media (4 November 2020), German Law Journal, forthcoming, available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3725188 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3725188
- Khan, Lina and Pozen, David E., A Skeptical View of Information Fiduciaries (2019), Harvard Law Review, Vol. 133, pp. 497-541, 2019, available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3341661

Course Schedule

Students should bear in mind that the contents of individual lessons may change slightly depending on the progress of the class.

Lessons	Content/Topic	Activities	Notes
Day 1	Course introduction	Lecture and discussion	
	The Platform Economy		
	General EU law framework applicable to new technologies in a nutshell: GDPR, E-Commerce Directive, Service Directive		
	What are digital platforms? What general legal challenges do they pose to the EU Digital Single Market?		
	Cases discussion	Lecture and discussion	
Day 2	The Regulation of Digital Platforms: Information Society Services, E-Commerce, Liability	Lecture and paper discussion	
	The Collaborative or Sharing Economy: The cases of Uber and Airbnb		
Day 3	Social Media Influencers: Introduction	Lecture and paper discussion	
	Social Media Influencers and content monetization	Teamwork	
Day 4	Social Media and Platform Speech Regulation	Paper discussion	
	The Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act	Teamwork	
Day 5	The Politics of Platforms. The Future Ahead	Teamwork	
	Exam		

NB: Should the instructor be unavailable, a substitute will give the scheduled or a prepared alternative lecture at the regular class time.

Luiss Course Policies

Attendance Rules

Course attendance is a primary requirement for a responsible learning experience at Luiss University.

- In order to be allowed to take the exam and to obtain the course attendance certificate, students must attend at least 90% of the hours of lessons and activities set out in the course syllabus.
- Attendance is counted on a weekly basis.
- Punctuality is mandatory. Students must arrive in class on time: any lateness, leaving class during the lesson without notice, not showing up on time after the break or leaving early will impact the attendance percentage.
- Students are responsible for keeping track of their absences and for catching up on any missed work.
- Make-up classes are always mandatory as part of the course program.
- For no reason (i.e. religious holidays, travel plans, family matters, etc.) will absences be excused.
- Students will receive an "F" on each exam they miss.
- Students who leave Luiss University before the end of the course that they are enrolled in must fill out an Official Withdrawal Request form and return it to Luiss Summer University Office. Students are allowed to withdraw from the courses up to the day before the weekly exam and they will receive an official withdrawal declaration. Students who leave Luiss University without submitting the form will receive an "F" in each non-completed course. In all cases, students will not be eligible for credits nor receive a refund.
- Students who do not attend more than 10% of hours of lessons and activities set out in the course syllabus will have no credits awarded and, without signing the Official Withdrawal Request Form, will receive an "F" as their final grade.

NB: The onus is on the students themselves to catch up on any missed work and to keep track of their absences/lateness.

Assignment Submissions

Late submissions of assignments, including papers, are not accepted. If an assignment is submitted after the deadline, the grade for the assignment will be an "F" (0 points), which may adversely impact the final grade of the course.

Scheduling Conflict

If, on occasion, a class has a scheduling conflict with another class (due to a simultaneously scheduled make- up class, site visit, etc.), the student is required to inform both instructors in advance, allowing them to prepare a formal justification for the class that will be missed. Even though an absence may be excused, students must be aware that there is no possibility of making up any assessed in-class activities they may have missed and no refund will be given for pre-paid visits/field trips.

Etiquette

- Electronic devices (cell phones, smartphones, iPods, iPads, laptops, etc.) must be switched off during class, unless otherwise instructed.
- Students' behavior must be informed by the principles of dignity, decorum and respect.
- Students must dress in a sober and dignified manner on university premises, keeping in mind that they are in an academic institution.

NB: Instructors who find that a student's behavior is inappropriate will seek to talk to him/her immediately. If the behavior continues, the instructor is required to contact the appropriate Luiss authorities.

Academic Honesty

All student work will be checked for plagiarism.

According to the Luiss Summer University Code of Conduct, "Violations include cheating on tests, plagiarism (taking words or texts, works of art, designs, etc., and presenting them as one's own), inadequate citation, recycled work, unauthorized assistance or similar actions not explicitly mentioned". Assignments and projects are specific to individual courses. Therefore, presenting the same work in two different courses (including previous courses) is considered recycling and is unacceptable.

Why is plagiarism bad?
- It is unethical.
- The student will fail the assignment and possibly the course.
- Faculty are required to report it.
- The student will be put on academic probation.
- The student might even be dismissed from college.

Bottom Line: Students MUST cite the sources that they use!

NB: Should issues on academic dishonesty arise, the faculty members will adhere to the relevant Luiss policy and report any suspected cases to the Luiss Course Leader for disciplinary review.

Useful Student Resources

Internal Luiss Resources

The Luiss Library offers its users a wide collection of both printed and online periodicals. To see the database of e-journals currently available, users can consult the dedicated page.

The Luiss Library has subscriptions to a number of databases, organized by:
- subject
- type
- remote access

Important research libraries in Italy

Biblioteca di Palazzo Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale, Fondo Marciano di Venezia, Biblioteche di Firenze and Biblioteca Vaticana.

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