

PUBP 4803/8803: Critical Developments in Software and Policy

Syllabus: Critical Developments in Open Source Seminar

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Objective: to produce Open Source Potential Indices (OSPIS)

Learning objectives:

1. Learn about open source supply, demand, policies
2. Learn to translate intuitions, anecdotes, and informal lore about open source (in society) into empirical evidence and testable hypotheses
3. Learn how to construct (and deconstruct) empirically useful indices, and learn many weaknesses and strengths of such metrics
4. Identify common and *creative* sources of data (or observations) about the prevalence of OS
5. Learn, first-hand, how to work in an open source development context.

Expectations:

There are no prerequisites for this course. Students are expected to come to class punctually, completing any assignments *beforehand*. Students are expected to regularly (daily) check with the course T-Square site. A calendar and set of readings will be available there, and these will continue to evolve over the course of the semester. Moreover, the T-Square site will be used to develop the course assignments and projects. In spirit with open source development, the T-Square site is expected to be used as a collaborative forum for generating, sharing, and developing ideas and research for this course.

We expect this class to embody many principles of open source (including transparency, collaborative sharing, etc.). As such, we are breaking the mold of the “typical” class model. The class community itself will be in the driver’s seat. Do not expect a textbook, lectures, tests, or even a term paper. Instead, expect to create an end product (a useful “open source index”) via the group process, where your classmates are your community of developers and the instructors are the ultimate users (and sole arbiters of quality). We expect everyone to work together – under some largely self-determined division of labor – to accomplish their goals. Expect to work alone or with a handful of classmates on a sub-project; expect to develop your own ideas and have some of them taken up by the group. Expect to have some ignored. Expect to share your insights and, better still, your research – and watch how the successful (students and) projects build upon them. We

expect some students will flourish as coordinators and organizers within the groups and sub-groups. We expect some students will excel at working on their own, tracking down elusive information or transforming information into usable data. We expect that successful group projects will require some or all students to contribute some “dirty work” or take on crucial tasks that might challenge them. Expect to wear multiple hats – even if some of them are somewhat uncomfortable.

Class participation is expected – either in the class when we meet in-person or remotely via the T-Square site. Class participation involves more than just active dialogue. It involves *constructive* and *informed* participation. Class participation also involves independent research (reading!) on relevant open source topics (see the T-Square reading list) and reporting on those readings to class – in person and via written reports on T-Square. All students should expect to “get their hands dirty” with some empirical data. Everyone should expect, by semester’s end, to identify and obtain some data relevant to the construction of OSPIs.

Students enrolled in PUBP 4803 and PUBP 8803 will enjoy different sets of readings and different expectations about contributions to the OSPIs’ development. In particular, the PUBP 4803 students will be expected to complete a thorough and ongoing examination of the popular press writings on open source software (its developers, its adopters, its role in society and policy, etc.). The PUBP 8803 students will do likewise, but emphasize scholarly writings and those published by academic presses. Insofar as these readings inform students’ research in the course, naturally, the students will be expected to read publications from across the spectrum. Students in PUBP 8803 will be expected to submit a 6-12 page written report on their course research findings. In addition, the students enrolled in PUBP 4803 and PUBP 8803 will be graded on a separate basis.

Assignments:

Homework – Small assignments will be given during the course, requiring individual work from students. These assignments will be described in advance, and at least 1 week will be given before they are due.

Group project – To be completed before the last day of class for the semester, group projects will represent the culmination of students’ efforts during the course. The guidelines for the project will be determined by the instructors in consultation with the groups. All students must contribute to the overall course project – the construction of an “open source index.” The criteria for grading the index include: scope (global is the ideal), scale (national and smaller is the ideal), timespan (more years is better), replicability, theoretical linkages, creativity, diversity (i.e., different types and concepts) and richness (i.e., number and quality) of component measures, and possibly others. During the development of the overall group project, students might wish to develop sub-projects or parallel projects. These sub-projects (which feed directly into overall group project) or parallel projects (which take alternative approaches to achieve the same ends) can be defined with permission of and consultation with the instructors. Students’ grades will depend on the quality of (and their contributions to) the overall group project and any sub-projects that they participate in.

Grading:

Homework	15%
Class participation	25%
Contributions to the whole	35%
Group project	25%

Honor Code:

Students in this class are expected to abide by the Georgia Tech Honor Code and avoid any instances of academic misconduct. For more information, see:

<http://www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/Honor/>

A crucial aspect of this course's nature and topic is collaboration. Students are expected to work together to develop group products. Although the output will often be a joint effort, students will also be graded on their individual contributions.

Students taking this course are further aware of their rights under the Student Bill of Academic Rights (see <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22.php>). Students taking this course, as described in this syllabus and subject to possible further change provided reasonable adjustment time has been given, acknowledge their acceptance of the terms of this course. Insofar as the course design and operation are inconsistent with these rights, students taking this course will be considered to have waived those rights. Students perceiving that some other aspect of this course's operation violates their rights are expected to notify the instructor(s) immediately in order to discuss matters, clarify possible miscommunications, and remedy the situation.

Required Readings:

Selected readings, available via T-Square.