Digital Economy and Society 37010

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About the course

Welcome!

Our society has gone through a digital transformation. On this course, we will study our digital economy through the lens of commercial law. It is a massive area.

We will first set the scene and study the nature of digital economy as well as some of its characteristic business models.

After that, we will focus on big and concrete topics such as: e-commerce, the regulation of big tech, the Internet of Things, AI and robots, fintech services, blockchain and cryptoassets, and also how to defend our democracy. We will cover a lot of ground. You can find the rough syllabus on the next page.

Rough syllabus

2024/1 The nature of digital economy. 1 The big picture. 2 Information, digital information, noise, attention, search, curation. 3 Platforms, network effects. 4 Disruptive innovation. 5 Limits to growth. 6 IoT and the metaverse. 7 Questions. **2024/2 Some basic business models.** 1 The big picture. 2 Pipeline model for retailers. 3 Freemium or subscription. 4 Standard-based ecosystems. 5 Technical platforms. 6 Online platforms. 7 The firm. 8 Where are we going? Social commerce, the metaverse, commoditisation, AI, short-term profitability. 9 Principles for survival. 10 Questions. **2024/3 e-Commerce: Online retail sales.** 1 The big picture. 2 There is a governing law, only certain courts have international jurisdiction. 3 Geo-blocking is restricted, online sales must not be prohibited. 4 Electronic contracts are binding. 5 General contract terms must be incorporated. 6 Website for online sales: two exercises. 7 Spamming is prohibited. 8 Unfair marketing is prohibited. 9 Consumers have contractual rights. 10 Questions. **2024/4 e-Commerce continued: Contract rules for online sale of goods and the supply of digital content.** 1 The big picture. 2 Mandatory nature. 3 Introduction to contents. 4 Price or data?. 5 Passing of risk, burden of proof. 6 Specifications. 7 Remedies. 8 Product security and product liability. 9 Terms of use, regulation of general contract terms. 10 Questions. **2024/5 Regulating Big Tech.** 1 The big picture. 2 Competition law. 3 Sector-specific regulation (traditional sectors). 4 Labour law. 5 Sector-specific regulation of platforms. 6 User data. 7 Data-driven advertising. 8 Content liability (intermediary liability). 9 Copyright. 10 Consumer protection, regulation of general contract terms. 11 Taxation. 12 Innovation and tech geopolitics. 13 Questions. **2024/6 The Internet of Things.** 1 The big picture. 2 Characteristic problem areas. 3 Cybersecurity. 4 General product safety and product liability. 5 Connectivity, broadband, the rights and duties of telecoms. 6 Privacy, processing of personal data, GDPR. 7 Access to and reuse of data, data mining. 8 Data sovereignty. 9 Some contract law issues. 10 Questions. **2024/7 Robots and AI: Ethics and Regulation.** 1 Introduction. 1.1 What is a robot?. 1.2 What is AI?. 1.3 Legal aspects. ETHICS. 2 Philosophical and ethical issues. 3 International law, the UNESCO Recommendation. 4 Ethical guidelines and regulation in the EU. 5 Safety issues. 6 Allocation of risk (robots). 7 Social capital (status) or biased decisision-making (AI). REGULATION. 8 Artificial Intelligence Act and Regulation on machinery. 9 Big data, data mining. 10 Intellectual property. 11 Readings and questions. **2024/8 Fintech: services, platforms, central-bank digital currencies.** 1 Introduction. 2 Payment services. 3 Lending and funding platforms. 4 Regtech and suptech. 5 Case: Libra. 6 Central-bank digital currencies: the e-yuan and the digital euro. 7 Readings and questions. **2024/9 Fintech (2): distributed ledger technology, blockchain, cryptoassets, smart contracts.** 1 Introduction. 2 General remarks about cryptocurrencies and ICOs. 3 The regulation of DLT and cryptoassets. 4 Example: NFTs. 5 Smart contracts. 6 Readings and questions. **2024/10 Democracy, the media, and disinformation.** 1 The big picture: democracy. 2 The effect of digital media in a democracy. 3 Attacking a democracy. 4 Transparency v corruption. 5 Freedom of speech, access to information. 6 The future of serious media. 7 How to fight disinformation and conspiracy theories?. 8 The Facebook case. 9 Questions.

How does it work?

All materials will be in Moodle.

I will upload about three lectures per week. My goal is to have roughly 10 big written lectures about the biggest things.

There are neither physical nor digital lectures in the traditional sense. Just a lot of text. Since this is a really complex area, it would be impossible to understand it in any meaningful way without actually reading text and studying the context.

Due to the fast development of the area, the main text is the continuously updated text in the lectures. Updating the lectures takes a lot of work!

My text is complemented by links to a wide range of other materials to illustrate the context and improve your learning.

The lectures are intended to form a whole. When you study a certain topic discussed in one lecture, other lectures may also be relevant.

This reflects the complex nature of the area. Economy and society in general are not organised hierarchically with narrow well-defined silos or boxes. Economy and society are really difficult to understand. Digitalisation just increases their inherent complexity. To understand this area, you generally need a holistic research approach with a narrow question as a starting point. This is roughly reflected in the choice of the lecture topics.

In each lecture, you will find links to legal and other materials. You don't really need to read the linked materials ... but feel free to have a look at the ones you find interesting! Since there are so many links, some may have ceased to work.

In each lecture, you will also find some simple questions. The simple questions are just a test for yourself to improve learning. Feel free to discuss them with yourself or your fellow students.

You learn by reading my introduction, by having a look at the linked materials you find interesting, and by trying to answer the simple questions on the basis of the materials. And most importantly, you will write a term paper.

Term paper

When all lectures are in place, you will write a term paper. I will assign the topics somewhat randomly based on your student number. It is my intention to ensure that you will have a couple of weeks to write the term paper. Since there will be enough time and you will have a chance to write the term paper in any place you like, you will not need to worry about whether you will be in Vaasa, Helsinki or somewhere else.

The term paper will be the one and only method of assessment.

I will tell you more about the term paper in Moodle when all lectures are in place!

Think!

This course is not a mechanical exercise. What I would like you to do is <u>think</u> about these very complex issues after you have seen the different kinds contexts and materials, and hopefully better <u>understand</u> these very complex phenomena and how they affect your business and society as a whole.