





# Governance (GOVN) 677

## Privacy and Transparency in a Networked World (Revision 1)

**Status:**

Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)  for the current revision 

**Delivery mode:**

[Grouped study](#) 

**Credits:**

3

**Area of study:**

Arts

**Prerequisites:**

None

**Precluded:**

GOVN 677 may not be taken for credit by students who have obtained credit for GOVN 377, LGST 377, or CRJS 377.

**Faculty:**

[Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

**Notes:**

Students in Group Study courses are advised that this syllabus may vary in key details in each instance of the course. Always refer to the Moodle site for the most up-to-date details on texts, assignment structure, and grading.

## Overview

The proliferation of the internet and other new technologies has had a seismic impact on our ability to create, collect, store, and share information. These new communication technologies promise great benefits for the transparency associated with good governance, but also conjure up images of a society where individual privacy is nonexistent, replaced by the all-knowing, all-seeing “big brother” in its governmental version and “big other” in its corporate version.

GOVN 677: Issues in Access to Information and Privacy Protection explores how society grapples with the issues surrounding information access and protection of privacy. It overviews a range of access and privacy debates that are critical to a free and democratic society, such as: SMART technologies and surveillance, anti-terrorism measures, social networking, data harvesting, and the social justice implications of the use of algorithms for predicting and modifying behaviour.

A shortened summary of some of the concerns raised in this course might look like: Internet + biometrics + data mining + RFID technologies = corporate/government “big brother” or Internet + Freedom of Information (FOI) + social networking = transparency and good governance?

Concerns about information access and privacy protection have given rise to Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection legislation worldwide. The course begins with how this legislation can protect and promote societal transparency and privacy. It then considers the impact of technologies on social and political interactions, with a particular focus on who wins and loses with the use of such technologies. It concludes with an overview of the proliferation of fake news and the use of ICT technologies by governments to influence the domestic politics of other countries.

## Outline

The course consists of the following eight units.

- Unit 1: Information Access and Privacy in a Networked World
- Unit 2: Information Privacy: Legislation, Policy and Personal Autonomy
- Unit 3: Information Access: Freedom of Information and Democracy
- Unit 4: Privacy and Access to Information in the Health Sector

- Unit 5: Public Safety, National Security and Surveillance
- Unit 6: New Technologies: Data Mining, Matching, and Management
- Unit 7: Research: The Implications for Access and Privacy
- Unit 8: The Brave New World of Big Other and Data Dystopia

## Evaluation

To receive credit for this course, students must participate in the online activities, successfully complete the assignments, and achieve a final mark of at least 60 per cent. Students should be familiar with the Master of Arts—Interdisciplinary Studies **grading system** [↗](#). Please note that it is students' responsibility to maintain their program status. Any student who receives a grade of "F" in one course, or a grade of "C" in more than one course, may be required to withdraw from the program.

The following table summarizes the evaluation activities and the credit weights associated with them.

Activity	Weight
Online Participation	15%
Critical Analysis	20%
Book/Film Critique	25%
Research Paper Outline and Bibliography	10%
Research Paper	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Materials

### Physical course materials

The following course materials are included in a course package that will be shipped to your home prior to your course's start date:

Stefanick, L. 2011 *Controlling Knowledge: Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection in a Networked World*

The textbook for this course is available for **free download** [↗](#) from AUPress

## Athabasca University Online Materials

**Course Home Page:** You will find Course Information (including the Assignment File and other pertinent information) at the top of the course home page. You will also find your Study Guide presented unit by unit online. You will find your assignments and links to submit your work to your professor on the course home page.

**Athabasca University Library:** Students are encouraged to browse the Library's Web site to review the Library collection of journal databases, electronic journals, and digital reference tools: <http://library.athabascau.ca> [↗](#).

## Important links

- › [Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies](#) [↗](#)
- › [Focus Areas](#) [↗](#)
- › [Courses](#) [↗](#)
- › [Fees and Funding](#) [↗](#)

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

*Opened in Revision 1, February 14, 2020*

*Updated April 3, 2025*