

All About the Internet

The history, how it works, and its impact on society

Course #	20SAI
Format:	Seminar
Moderator(s):	John Armstrong, Wendy Parrish
Date and Time:	Tuesday, 1:30-3:30 10 weeks, starting Feb. 25, 2020
Location:	Applewood in Amherst, meeting room
Maximum number of participants	18
Auditors accepted:	Yes, up to 2

Purpose: In this seminar we will explore some components of the internet, and how it has changed how we interact with each other, with society, and with organizations.

Description: This is a non-technical seminar to provide a forum for participants to acquaint themselves with key parts of the internet, as well as to explore its impact on our society today. Starting with a history of how it started and has evolved, we'll learn about some key components (security, privacy, government and business use, banking), and enter into how this has impacted society as a whole. Topics will include the early optimistic approaches to information sharing (Wikipedia, Google), and emerging problems such as viruses, worms and other malware, pornography and criminal activity on the dark web. We will consider the business models of enterprises taking advantage of the new technology (is the customer the user or the advertiser?) as well as the legal environment. Other possible topics include the disruption of established businesses, the emergence of the gig economy, the changing meaning of privacy, trolling, election interference, increased social sorting and political polarization, and many more.

Role of participants: Participants will choose a topic from a list provided by the moderators or develop their own topic and prepare a presentation of approximately 30 minutes, followed by discussion. The moderators will work individually with participants to provide a list of questions that will help with research.

Resources: None are required. The following provide some basic information

Internet for Dummies (Levine)

How the Internet Works (Gralla)

The Internet made Easy (Bernstein)

The moderators will provide a list of on-line references.

About the Moderators: John Armstrong has led many technical and non-technical seminars, and has a background in computer science and research. Wendy Parrish is a retired computer programmer.