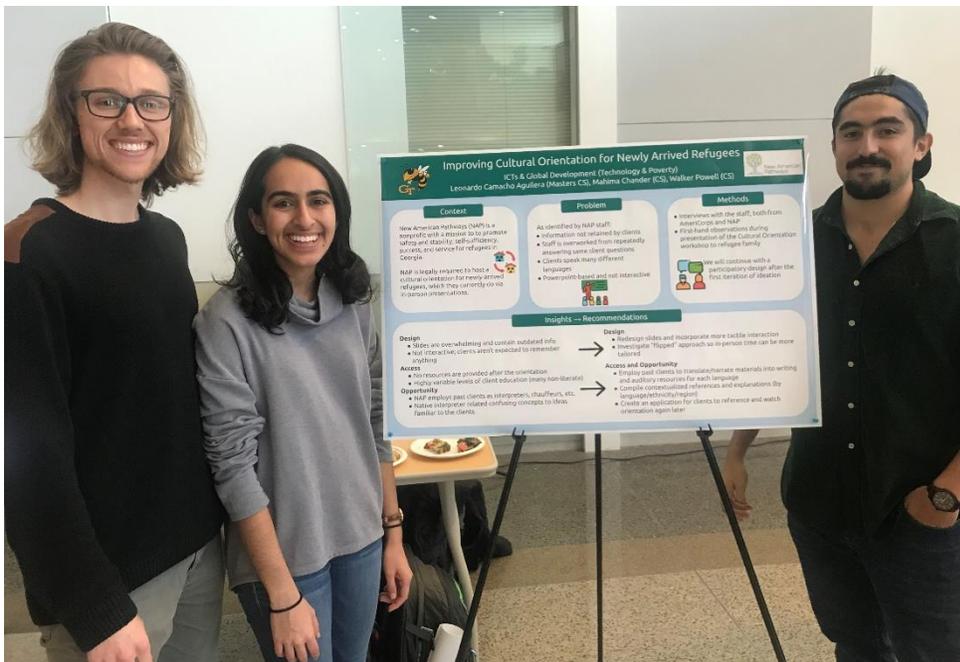**Technology and Poverty: Thinking Globally and Acting Locally**
By Neha Kumar

In Fall 2015, when I started at Tech, I designed and taught a course called "Technology & Poverty" to a small class of 12. The course title subsequently transitioned to the label of ICTD (short for Information and Communication Technologies and Global Development) when this course went through the approval process at the institute level. It is now cross-listed under International Affairs as well as Computer Science, with course numbers 4745 and 6745, and invites a growing number of undergraduates and graduates from all over campus.

Still popularly called "Tech&Pov" by the students, the course focuses on information and communication technology (ICT) design, adoption, and use as seen through the lens of global development. For engaging with global development, we begin with the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), gradually learning to critique this framing as well. Students are introduced to the history of technological advancement, the global development discourse from the 1940s to the present era, and poverty as experienced ground-up, before employing the design thinking process for team projects. We simultaneously shift our gaze to consider popular domains of global development, touching upon emerging developments at the intersection of ICTs and public health, education, gender, among other topics, before asking what all these mean for us as local and global citizens. Students leave the course sensitized towards understanding the needs of underserved and under-represented individuals and communities in contexts different from their own, and an enhanced ability to do something with it, or so I trust.

Student team presents at the SLS Student Showcase, Fall 2019

A key part of the course is the final project that students pursue in small groups. Students leverage assets-based approaches that they learn about in the course to engage in "problem discovery," as they offer their services to community-based organizations on a topic of global development they identify for themselves. This often begins with a service learning assignment in the first few weeks of the course, which encourages them to step beyond their comfort zones and reconceptualize mental models of community service. The UN SDGs are a powerful tool for doing the latter, and I greatly enjoy introducing my

students to it, even as I draw them into discussions around questioning the general applicability of these goals. In the last three years, the students have presented their final projects at the SLS Showcase that takes place at the end of Fall (see photo).

There are no prerequisites for the course. Students with a keen interest in studying how technology has been designed to drive global development, but may or may not be successful at it, are invited to take this course. Many of these students end up taking on the global development minor, housed at the School of International Affairs. A large percentage of the class is comprised of undergraduate and graduate Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) students.

See the course syllabus here.