# Media and Digital Networks

## Prof. Matteo Tarantino

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course aims to provide students with an overview of the main paradigms related to the relationship between digital media and society, with particular reference to the theories of online sociality, the paradigm of *datafication* and the role of algorithms in society. The course is complemented by a practical class on web-writing techniques.

By the end of the course, students will: be able to recognise specific types of digital platform; understand the sociological mechanisms related to adopting, using and abandoning a digital platform; understand the production and value-extraction mechanisms at play on web and social-media platforms; understand the features of online identity-building processes; be able to recognise uses and impacts of the paradigm of *datafication*; and understand the role of the cultural dimension in shaping digital platforms.

By the end of the course, students will be able to: evaluate and formulate digital communication strategies; develop a cost/benefit analysis in relation to joining an online platform; map the social impacts of a platform; critically approach objects and phenomena linked to the digital world.

***COURSE CONTENT***

1. Key concepts -1: The information society, digitalisation and convergence.
2. Key concepts -2: Databases, algorithms, social networks, the basics of graph theory.
3. A historical approach to digital media.
4. Online identity building and managing processes -1: historical panorama on the theories of the self.
5. Online identity building and managing processes -2: vulnerability and conflict management.
6. Online communities: history, structures and the mechanisms of establishment and maintenance.
7. The economics of social media -1: online-experience value extraction paradigms.
8. The economics of social media -2: Quantification and datafication. The role of algorithms.
9. The cultural dimension of developing online platforms: e-commerce and social networking in China.

***READING LIST***

G. Balbi, P. Magaudda. *Storia dei Media Digitali: Rivoluzioni e Continuità*. Roma, Laterza. 2014.

boyd, d. (2015) *It’s complicated. La vita sociale degli adolescenti sul web*. Roma, Castelvecchi. 2018

Cardon, D. *Che cosa sognano gli algoritmi. Le nostre vite al tempo dei big data*. Milano, Mondadori. 2016.

Tarantino, M. *Il tecno-dragone: L’Immaginario Tecnologico Cinese Ieri, Oggi e Domani*

 Milano, Vita & Pensiero. 2019.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Frontal lectures. Students are encouraged to work on producing digital content during the course, particularly podcasts.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

1. Students will be assessed by means of a final written exam on the entire reading list. The exam comprises ten closed questions (each worth one mark) and two open questions.
2. Students can increase their mark by producing digital content (two podcasts) intended for the University radio station, to be agreed in advance with the lecturer. These will be awarded up to two marks.
3. The practical class involves the submission of an individual written assignment on an assigned scenario. The piece of work will be assessed on its degree of appropriateness, robustness, creativity and rigor, and is worth a maximum of 1 additional mark.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Students are encouraged to bring their own laptop to lectures.

*Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board*.