# Sociology of Digital Media

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***COURSE OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED LEARNING RESULTS***

The course aims to provide students with a general sociological understanding of the relationship between the digital media system and the contemporary social context. At the end of the course, students will have acquired the conceptual and methodological tools useful for understanding the innovation processes underway in the field of communication and the relationships they maintain with wider processes of social change. The course has the triple objective of offering the interpretative and critical tools to understand (1) the characteristics of the digital evolution of the media system and (2) the emergence of social media and their influence on the articulation of personal identities and relationships, and finally, to (3) provide methodological tools to analyze the interpretation and use of digital media. In the first section (1) the history of the development and digitization processes of new media will be illustrated, offering a non-deterministic and fully contextualized perspective of technologies such as the Internet, mobile phones, television, and photography. A conceptual and theoretical framework will be provided to understand how social relations enter "inside" technology, including the biases that can be inscribed in the technical knowledge and digital artefacts we use every day. Critical explorations of future scenarios relating to Web 4.0 and 5.0 and innovative interfaces will also be envisaged. In the second section (2) we will deepen the role that social media has in the articulation of relational, identity, and consumption processes. Particular emphasis will be placed on the themes of influence and activism, as well as on potentially problematic issues such as privacy, surveillance and fake news. In the last section (3) some basic methodological tools will be provided for the analysis of relational and expressive forms related to the new media language.

**Knowledge and understanding.** Through the analysis of cases and reasoned readings of scientific texts, the course will allow students to: internalize the theoretical and methodological references of the sociological approach to the study of digital media; demonstrate a basic understanding of research applied to digital infrastructures and practices in the current social context.

**Ability to apply knowledge and understanding.** Students will learn: to analyze and question how new digital tools are changing our relationships and the social and communicative reality around us; to place new digital technologies within a broader historical trajectory; to connect and integrate sociological knowledge with those offered by other disciplines such as, for example, marketing; to evaluate in practical terms the usefulness of digital platforms for the study of social phenomena.

**Autonomy of judgment.** The study of the discipline will allow students to: independently examine debates on digital media by drawing on the sociological perspective; critically evaluate the value and ethical dimension of digital media usage.

**Communication skills.** Students will be asked to interact orally in the classroom through questions, exchanges with peers and writing short presentations. In addition, writing skills will be enhanced through preparation for a written exam that requires synthesizing complex topics and summarizing fundamental sociological concepts.

**Learning ability.** The learning ability of students will be stimulated through the request to expand, update, and deepen the knowledge acquired in the classroom, even in an autonomous and continuous way, through individual work and study. It will be required to adopt a critical learning method capable of connecting theoretical skills and empirical analysis.

***COURSE PROGRAM***

**1. The digital evolution of the media system**

1.1 Approaching to the study of digital media

1.2 The socio-technological evolution of media: theoretical paradigms

1.3 The computer, the internet, the mobile phone

1.4 Digitization of analog media and convergence

1.5 Web 4.0, 5.0 and the future of interfaces

**2. Social media**

2.1 Identity on the network

2.2 Networked intimacy and networked individualism

2.3 Participatory culture

2.4 Social media influence

2.5 Mediactivism

2.6 Fake news, surveillance, and content moderation

**3. The methodological tools**

3.1 Evolution of studies on the network

3.2 Big Data and Deep Data

3.3 Qualitative methods: the netnographic approach

***BIBLIOGRAPHY***

For attending students, the materials to be studied will be agreed in class with the teacher. The teacher will communicate the detailed program, the reading list and the supporting materials during the first lesson: all the precise indications will be made available on Blackboard.

***COURSE TEACHING***

Traditional classroom lessons will be accompanied by a series of classroom discussions and in-depth lessons with the participation of researchers and representatives of some companies operating in the field of digital media. Attendance is not mandatory, but recommended, and implies active participation. The detailed program containing the calendar and all the teaching materials used in the course (slides of the teacher, readings, case studies, videos, etc.) will be made available on the Blackboard platform.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

There are two different exam methods among which the student can choose, by virtue of the fact that she decides to attend classroom lessons assiduously and to participate in group or individual work planned during the course, or that she decides to prepare by not attending. The final exam will be held in written form with open questions: this applies to both attending and non-attending students. Attending students will however be entitled to a point bonus for participating in group or individual work. The final grade, expressed out of thirty, will take into account the accuracy and relevance of the answer given, the ability to develop connections, the appropriateness of language and the level of personal contribution to understanding the issues of the Sociology of Digital Media.

***WARNINGS AND PREREQUISITES***

No prerequisites are required to attend the course. However, interest and intellectual curiosity are hoped to fuel the debate in the classroom.

***SCHEDULE AND STUDENTS RECEPTION***

Reception hours are available online on the teacher's personal page, which can be consulted at <http://docenti.unicatt.it/>