# Politics in Media

## Prof. Giovanna Mascheroni

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

The purpose of this course is to provide an understanding of the role of the media – and the relationship between media and power - in contemporary democracies. Accordingly, the course examines the links between the media, power and politics in theory and practice, from a comparative perspective. Moreover, it aims to offer a critical review of key aspects of contemporary theory and research in political communication, media and audience studies, internet studies.

*Intended Learning Outcomes (knowledge and understanding)*

As a result of the course the students will be able to understand the main theories, and evaluate the strengths and the weaknesses of the various approaches that aim to explain the compex relationship between the media system and the political system.

*Intended Learning Outcomes (applying knowledge and understanding)*

Students will also manage to apply their knowledge to the critical evluation of key contemporary issues such as ‘fake news’ and disinformation campaigns on social media, data-driven campaigns, the mediated performance of populism, celebrity politics, digital citizenship, the consequences of datafication for citizenship rights.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course examines a range of issues related to media and politics, including:

– the media and theories of democratic engagement;

– the mediatization of politics (and society);

– the hybrid media system and the political news cycle;

– media representations, agenda setting and the formation of public opinion;

– celebrity politics and the popularisation of politics.

– socially mediated publicness and networked affective publics;

– the logic of collective vs. connective action;

– the role of social media and automation in election campaigns (computational propaganda);

– ‘fake news’;

– digital citizenship in a datafied society.

***READING LIST***

Lecture notes and class notes (the slides will be made available on Blackboard).

Reading list (also available on Blackboard):

Street, J. (2004). Celebrity politicians: popular culture and political representation. *The British journal of politics and international relations, 6*(4), 435-452.

Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics. *Information, communication & society, 15*(5), 739-768.

Römmele, A., & Gibson, R. (2020). Scientific and subversive: The two faces of the fourth era of political campaigning. *New Media & Society, 22*(4), 595-610.

Farkas, J., & Schou, J. (2018). Fake news as a floating signifier: hegemony, antagonism and the politics of falsehood. *Javnost-The Public, 25*(3), 298-314.

Van Dijck, J. (2014). Datafication, dataism and dataveillance: Big Data between scientific paradigm and ideology. Surveillance & Society, 12(2), 197-208.

Persily, N., & Tucker, J. (Eds.). (2020). *Social Media and Democracy: The State of the Field, Prospects for Reform* [only Ch. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781108890960 OPEN ACCESS

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course is based on lectures, and students-led seminars (group presentations). Group assignments will be planned as part of the final evaluation.

In case the evolution of Covid-19 pandemic does not allow teaching in presence, online lectures and remote learning will be guaranteed. Channels and modalities will be communicated in due time to all students.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Attending students’ peformance will be assessed through a group assignment (30%) and final written exam (70%). More specifically, students will be asked to critically read, analyise and present in small groups (3-4 persons per group) two or three scientific articles chosen among a list of articles provided at the beginning of the course, and on the basis of a list of questions that will guide the analysis. The assessment criteria include the ability to address all the guiding questions; the ability to make links to other theories and works in media and politics as well as in other courses; the ability to identify critical issues; soundness and clarity of the argumentation. The final exam will include 5 open ended questions on the topics of the lectures and the reading list. Each question will be given a score from 0 (missing answer) to 6 (excellent answer). The assessment is based on the number of answers, the ability to use the correct terminology, the reference to the appropriate concepts and theories, the identification of critical issues, the clarity and soundness of the argumentation.

Students who did not engage in the group assignment will take a final exam including 10 open-ended questions based on the reading list. Each question will be given a score from 0 (missing answer) to 6 (=A, excellent answer). The assessment is based on the number of answers, the ability to use the correct terminology, the reference to the appropriate concepts and theories, the identification of critical issues, the clarity and soundness of the argumentation.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

The course introduces the students to the study of the role of media in contemporary politics. In so doing, it will draw especially on the concepts and theories discussed in the Sociology course. Students are therefore encouraged to review the topics and language of Sociology.

*Place and time of consultation hours*

Prof. Giovanna Mascheroni: Monday, 16.30 – 18.00, Department of Communication, via Sant’Agnese 2, 4th floor.