# Journalism and Digital Information

## Prof. Massimo Donelli; Prof. Paolo Braga

## [Teaching syllabus borrowed from the Degree in Linguistic Sciences, including the course name *History of Journalism*]

## Module 1: *Prof. Massimo Donelli*

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

The course aims to provide students with the key concepts they need to: 1. understand the crisis of traditional information and, in particular, the press; 2. analyse the new types of journalism introduced after the digital revolution; 3. get an overview of the news market.

*Knowledge and understanding.*At the end of the course, students will be able to illustrate the opportunities and the risks arising from today’s easy access to the reading, production, and diffusion of public and private news, which has become so fast that the traditional informational professionals are no longer the exclusive owners of the sources of information, nor the only information providers in the social context.

*Ability to apply knowledge and understanding.* Moreover, at the end of the course, students will be able to: 1. orient themselves in the universe of information; 2. carry out a critical reading of the contents published by the different media; 3. understand that nowadays the proper and critical reading of news is fundamental to become a conscious citizen.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course will focus on journalism practised daily both on and off paper, in particular on TV, radio and, above all, the internet, which is the medium that shaped the rhythms and practices of our lives in ways that were totally unthinkable only twenty years ago. What connects them all despite the countless (and not insignificant) differences? Non-material, free journalism. In other words, news about everyone, for everyone and among everyone, “running” 24-7 unconstrained by the limits of space and time that characterise newspapers and magazines journalism.

*Newspaper journalism -* Dailies and periodicals are experiencing the most serious crisis of the last 100 years (but retain a strong baptismal power). Analysis of the causes. Snapshot of the market.

*Radio journalism -* The radio, master of journalism and more. Breaking news? News you can use? Interactivity? The radio, upon which lies the foundation of television, created the archetypes of non-material news. In many respects, it is the “mother” of the internet.

*TV journalism -* Television is the queen of news. It compiles the hierarchy of the news on the evening news shows. But television news is part of a show schedule, broadcast between other types of programmes, and hybridises with infotainment.

*Web journalism -* The websites of dailies and periodicals. Search engines. Social networks. News aggregators. Web televisions. Web radios. News alerts. Newsletters. Press agencies.

*Citizen journalism (hard and soft) -* Now that, thanks to the web, access to news sources is no longer the exclusive right of professional journalism; now that everyone can write texts, record sounds and images and “post them”; now that the culture of “infoparticipation” has, thanks to social networking, exploded; well, now we are in the age of citizen journalism, which ranges from Twitter to Tripadvisor.

*Twitter journalism - Instagram journalism - Facebook journalism -* From ordinary people to directors of publications, as well as stars of the show business, footballers, politicians, newspapers and agencies, social networks are the “newspapers” about everyone for everyone. With important impacts on individuals, the publishing market and the society.

*Interactvity, rapidity and credibility -* Interactivity is the main characteristic of digital journalism. A subversive characteristic: from top-down to bottom-up, the relationship between the journalist and the “reader” changes radically: now the former must engage with the latter. The other key characteristic is rapidity: which, however, may come at the cost of credibility, with serious, sometimes extremely serious consequences.

***READING LIST***

M. Donelli, course slides in PDF format.

S. Capecchi, *L’audience “attiva”,* Carocci 2017

M. Gui, *A dieta di media*, il Mulino, 2014.

N. Bruno-R. Mastrolonardo, *La scimmia che vinse il Pulitzer*, Garzanti, 2010.

M. Barisione, *Comunicazione e società*, il Mulino, 2009.

S. Maistrello, *Giornalismo e nuovi media*, Apogeo, 2010.

V. Zeno-Zencovich, *La libertà d’espressione*, Il Mulino, 2004.

V. Zeno-Zencovich, *Alcune ragioni per sopprimere la libertà di stampa*, Laterza, 1995.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Frontal lectures with the participation of students and discussion/debate on the topics covered in class.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Oral exam only based on course slides. Students will be assessed on: 1. their ability to orient themselves among the topics and the issues illustrated during the course; 2. their knowledge of the key concepts explained by the lecturer in class and on the slides (50% of the final mark); 3. their ability to adopt a critical approach towards the world of information (50% of the final mark): in particular, students will have to demonstrate that they have become aware of all the industrial, political, social, and relational implications that the digital revolution has imposed and still imposes to journalism.

Other assessment criteria: the accuracy of the answers, the appropriate use of a specific terminology, the ability to use argumentation to create a structured and coherent discourse, and the capacity to identify conceptual connections and open issues.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

There are no prerequisites for attending the course. However, students should: 1. show a certain curiosity towards the world of information and all its digital elements; 2. be ready to become conscious citizens (instead of accepting any kind of news in a passive way). In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to students.

*Please note:* students that choose module 2 must previously attend and take the exam of the module 1 of the same course. For students who enrol in the annual course (8 CFU), the methods to register and take the midterm exam concerning the module 1 are indicated on the lecturers’ personal webpages.

*Office hours*

Prof. Massimo Donelli receives students at university by appointment arranged via e-mail.

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.

### Module 2: Prof. Paolo Braga

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

The course aims to extend students’ knowledge of the value of information and journalism in the media system, understood as an industrial system, with a focus on the specific cultural aspects of each medium. It aims to develop an information theory that acknowledges the constraints associated with the editorial, production, market and policy dynamics affecting traditional and online information. It will also highlight areas of convergence between information, rhetoric and persuasion.

By the end of the course, students will be able to identify and undertake independent research on information presented in the media. They will also have the skills to apply validation criteria to the reliability of news, making links between news and any associated political, ideological and propagandistic objectives.

***COURSE CONTENT***

– The specific role of the various media (cinema, television, newspapers, periodical press, news websites) in developing the cultural landscape of society.

– Possible factors for conditioning and altering information, with a particular focus on the role of spin doctors.

– Functions and characteristics of the media elite.

– The relationship between information and storytelling.

– Analysis of some examples of information on issues of political, cultural and economic contention.

***READING LIST***

M. Foa, *Gli stregoni della notizia. Atto secondo. Come si fabbrica informazione al servizio dei governi,* Guerini e Associati, Milan, 2018.

G. Lakoff, *Non pensare all’elefante! Come riprendersi il discorso politico*, Chiarelettere,Milan, 2019.

F. Luisi, *Maghi, guerrieri e guaritori: gli archetipi della politica italiana*, Mondadori,Milano, 2020.

One of the following:

A. Ivereigh, *Come difendere la fede senza alzare la voce,* Lindau, Turin, 2016, 2nd edition. F. Luntz, *Words That Work: It's Not What You Say, It's What People Hear*, Hachette Books, New York, 2007.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course will be delivered by means of a combination of frontal lectures and single-subject study sessions in the form of discussions of case studies in class.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Oral exam. Assessment criteria: the knowledge of the elements having an impact on information (50% of the final mark) and the ability to carry out a critical analysis of the case studies presented in class or by the student during the exam (50% of the final mark).

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

As this is an introductory course, there are no prerequisites in terms of content. However, students are expected to harbour a minimum degree of interest in information provided by the media and to keep up with the political and cultural debate in the main newspapers on a daily basis.

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