**Methods of Research in Media & Communications**

## Prof. Giovanna Mascheroni

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

The course aims to provide students with the theoretical and methodological tools for the study of communication, the media system, analogical and digital media, and datafication from a sociological perspective. In particular, first of all, the main sociological theories concerning media, social media, Big Data, and datafication will be introduced; then, through the reading of research works and case studies, the different audience analysis methods, and the ethical challenges posed by the research on media will be presented. At the end of the course, students will be able to know the latest and most important theories in the field of the sociology of media and internet studies; understand the works of the authors examined during the course; understand the main research methods used by sociology to study the practices related to use of media and the social consequences of mediatisation, digitalisation, and datafication; apply their newly-acquired theoretical and methodological knowledge to the critical analysis of mediatisation, digitalisation, and datafication.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course is divided into two parts: the first one, mostly based on the theory, will provide a critical reading of the media system, culture and connectivity, the mediatisation phenomenon, big data and datafication processes, algorithms and artificial intelligence. The second one, focused on the practice, will present the advantages and limits of different qualitative (especially the ethnographical approach) and quantitative methods adopted for the study of media audiences and digital communication practices, and the processes of datafication and automation of media production and consumption. During this part of the course, students will have the opportunity to define a research project.

***READING LIST***

For *attending students*:

A. Caliandro-A. Gandini, (2019). *I metodi digitali nella ricerca sociale*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

S. Capecchi, *L'audience «attiva». Effetti e usi sociali dei media*, Rome, Carocci, 2015 (only chapters 2 and 3).

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

*Non-attending students*

A. Caliandro-A Gandini (2019). *I metodi digitali nella ricerca sociale*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

J. Van Dijck-T. Poell-M. Waal (2019). *Platform Society. Valori pubblici e società connessa*. Rome: Guerini.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course includes: theory-based lectures, which will provide a critical discussion of the material on the reading list with the support of empirical evidence and audiovisual material (part one); methodology-based lectures, during which the lecturer will introduce students to different research methods, through the discussion of empirical research; and practical sessions, during which students will apply the theoretical and methodological knowledge in the design of an empirical research project under the supervision of the lecturer.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students may decide whether to take the exam for attending or non-attending students.

Attending students will be assessed on the knowledge and skills acquired as follows: the design of a research project in small groups (50%), a written test with open questions on course notes and reading list for attending students (50%). Both assessments are aimed at ascertaining students’ understanding of the theoretical and conceptual tools and methodological skills required for the study of media and digital communicative practices, datafication and automation processes in media production and consumption etc. More specifically, the research project will assess the appropriate choice of the research methods in relation to the research question, the competent use of subject-specific terminology and relevant conceptual apparatus, clarity of expression and logical structure and effective expression and justification of arguments. The five open questions in the written assessment will have equal weight, marked from 0 (unanswered) to 6 (excellent answer). The mark will be calculated based on number of answers, their relevance, appropriate use of specific terminology, ability to structure reasoned and coherent argumentation and ability to identify conceptual links and open questions. The exam will be marked out of 30.

Non-attending students will be assessed on their knowledge and skills by means of an oral exam on the contents of the texts on the reading list for non-attending students. The final mark will be based on accuracy of students’ answers, their communicative skills and ability to make effective, well-structured arguments as demonstrated in the oral exam.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Basic knowledge of social research methods will be beneficial. The following reading is recommended for students who have not previously studied a course on research methodology:

R. Bichi, *L’intervista biografica. Una proposta metodologica*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan, 2002.

M. Caselli, *Indagare col questionario. Introduzione alla ricerca sociale di tipo standard*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan, 2005.

E. Cellini, *L’osservazione nelle scienze umane*, FrancoAngeli, Milan, 2008.

Knowledge of the English language will also be beneficial, enabling students to access some of the material on the reading list and other material presented during the course.

In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching and assessment will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to students.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at <https://docenti.unicatt.it/ppd2/en/#/en/docenti/15915/giovanna-mascheroni/didattica> or on the Faculty notice board.