# Sociology of Media and Communication

## Prof. Giovanna Mascheroni, Prof. Matteo Stefanelli

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

First Module

The purpose of this course is to provide students with the fundamentals of media studies and the resources to understand the complex relationship between media, culture and society.

The course examines the different dimensions of the media- ranging from content and infrastructures to audiences, communities, algorithms and data, grounding the analysis of media and communications within broader sociological and political theories of social order and social change. In so doing, it explores selected critical perspectives which have proved influential in the field of media and communications and which provide answers to the question why we study the media. Moreover, by taking the concept of mediatization and everyday life practices as the entry point, the course provides a fresh way in to thinking about media cultures, institutions, power, technologies and industries.

Second Module

The course aims to offer some theoretical notions and some categories of analysis that could provide a better understanding of the main evolutionary junctions within the history of media from its origins to today, with particular attention to the Italian and Japanese contexts.

At the end of the course, In addition, students will be provided with historical and theoretical tools to interpret the most recent evolution of the media system in Japan, deepening the theme of the relationship between television, publishing and the food industry in the strategic sector of anime.

*Intended Learning Outcomes (knowledge and understanding)*

As a result of the course the students will be able to understand the key theories and concepts in media studies. More specifically, students will be encouraged to think critically about how media underpin the way we experience much of our lives as normal and natural, and move beyond a techno-determinist *media effects* approach.

Moreover, the students will be able to recognize the general outline of the development of the media system in Italy, to identify the main historical factors that have contributed to determining the progress of the Italian media, and to critically examine the interdependence between linguistic, institutional and economic dimensions that make up the integrated system of media experience.

*Intended Learning Outcomes (applying knowledge and understanding)*

Students will also manage to apply their knowledge to the critical evaluation of the media system, media content and communication infrastructures, audiences, algorithms and data, power of and through the media.

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***COURSE CONTENT***

First Module

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

– media and everyday life;

– media spaces and places;

– the meanings and experiences of the media;

– media and identity;

– media infrastructures;

– mediatization;

– media and power;

– media and the public sphere;

– media and the rise of celebrity culture;

– data and privacy;

– life as a media commodity;

– media ethics and regulation.

Second Module

The course will be divided into two parts, and will offer an overview of some of the main historical stages, theoretical issues and organizational configurations of the media system, in the light of the evolution of the relationship between social context and media experience, according to the perspectives of institutional and cultural history of media and in line with the knowledge developed by the disciplines of Media Studies and Television Studies.

In the first part of the course we will present a general scenario of the media development of in Italy from the nineteenth century up to the 2000s, to understand the processes that have conditioned the media in modern and contemporary society, considering the role of the press, radio, of cinema and television. A particular study will be dedicated to the evolution of the relationship between the fashion industry and the Italian media system.

The second part will provide elements of social media history in Japan, with particular attention to the evolution of the relationship between television and the food industry, deepening the birth and development of the television animation sector in relation to the birth of modern forms of character. merchandising.

***READING LIST[[1]](#footnote-1)***

First Module

Couldry, N., & Hepp, A. (2017). *The Mediated Construction of Reality*. Polity.

McQuail, D., Deuze, M. (2020). *McQuail’s Media and Mass Communication Theory* (only Ch. 2, 3, 4, 5, 14, 15, 16, 17). Sage.

Second Module

F. Colombo, *Media and communication in Italy: historical and theoretical perspectives*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 2019 (part 1: pages 16/30, 56/84; part II: pages 213/227).

M. Steinberg, *Anime’s Media Mix. Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan,* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis - London, 2012 (Chapters: 1, 2).

During the course the teacher will provide some more reading materials; these will act as optional resources, beyond presentations that will have to be considered as integral part of the course’s program.

***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***

The assessment of Module I will account for 60% of the overall evaluation, while the assessment of Module II will account for 40% of the final evaluation.

First Module

Attending students’ peformance will be assessed through one group assignment and a final written exam. The final exam will include a list of 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 (=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. For the assignments (presentations or short essays in small groups (3-4 persons per group), depending on the COVID-19 pandemic), students are expected to read the recommended reading list, find additional resources on the given topic and apply the theories and readings to the analysis of case studies. The assignments will be assessed considering the originality of the work, the ability to refer to the appropriate theories and concepts, the use of the correct terminology, the quality of the presentation, the clarity of the argumentation. The assignment will provide 1 (if graded 25-27) or 2 (if graded 28-30) extrapoints to the final exam grade.

Students who have not completed the assignments 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.

Second Module

At the end of the course, students will have to take a written exam based on the whole content of the course, according to the instructions provided in the reading list for attending and non-attending students. During the exam, designed as a list of three open questions, students will be tested on their ability to find their way among the different historical periods, the main actors, and the key issues discussed during the lectures. The assessment criteria will include the relevance of the answers, the use of an appropriate 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***

First Module

The course introduces the students to the study of the role of media in contemporary societies. 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.

Second Module

Students can find further information on the course syllabus, the course in general, and room/timetable changes on the lecturer’s webpage. Furthermore, on the Blackboard page of the course, they can find the teaching material used in class, together with additional documents, information, and instructions to be considered as a useful resource for a better understanding of specific topics and issues presented during the course. Students should have a basic knowledge of the English language.

Preferred requirements: a basic knowledge of Italian and basic knowledge of media history.

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.

*Place and time of consultation hours*

Prof. G. Mascheroni: Monday, 16,30 – 18,00, Department of Communication and Performing Arts, via Sant’Agnese 2, 4th floor.

Prof. M. Stefanelli receives uppon appointment by email.

1. I testi indicati nella bibliografia sono acquistabili presso le librerie di Ateneo; è possibile acquistarli anche presso altri rivenditori. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)