# Sociology of Media and Communication

## Prof. Giovanna Mascheroni; Prof. Lorenzo Zaffaroni

***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 provide students with theoretical concepts and analytical tools to analyse the historical and social processes – including the significant moments, the continuities and changes – in media history from the 19th century to the present. In addition to ‘traditional’ media, the course also examines modern and contemporary media developments, including social and participatory media. By examining the intricate relationship between society and the media, this course delves into the varied and multifaceted histories of the media, emphasizing their cultural and social significance.

Furthermore, the course focuses on photography and provides a comprehensive understanding of its social and cultural history, specifically discussing its complex and evolving relationship with the fashion industry.

*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.

Furthermore, students will acquire theoretical concepts and analytical tools to analyse media history and the trajectories of various media. By the end of the course, students will be able to discuss and evaluate the significance of media in different historical periods and contexts.

*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.

***COURSE CONTENT***

First Module

The course introduces to the main theories around the effects and the social consequences of the media. Moreover, it 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 the rise of celebrity culture;

– data and privacy;

– life as a media commodity;

– media ethics and regulation.

Second Module

The second module is divided in two parts. The first provides an overview of the key historical periods, theoretical debates, and organizational structures within the media system. Specifically, it offers a comprehensive survey of media evolution from the late 19th century to the present day, presenting and discussing the underlying factors and historical processes that shaped the contemporary media landscape. In doing so, the first part of the course examines the diverse roles played by various media, such as the press, photography, cinema, and television.

The second part will focus on the social and cultural history of photography, with a particular emphasis on the relationship and changing dynamics between photography and the fashion industry.

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

First Module

Couldry, N., & Hepp, A. (2017). *The Mediated Construction of Reality*. Polity (only chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7).

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

Second Module

Burke, P., & Briggs, A. (2020). *A Social History of the Media* (Fourth Edition). Polity (only chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7).

During the course, the teacher may provide students with additional reading materials.

***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.

***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 in small groups (4-5 persons per group) students are expected to analyse the communicative practices of (micro-)celebrity activists using a scraping tool for Instagram (Phantom Buster). 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 interpretation of the data, 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 5 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

Upon completion of the course, students will be required to take a written exam covering the course program, as outlined in the reading list for both attending and non-attending students. The exam will consist of three open-ended questions aimed at appraising the students’ ability to reflect on the different themes, concepts and examples discussed during the lectures. The evaluation criteria will take into account the relevance of the responses, the use of an appropriate terminology, and the ability to construct a well-structured and coherent argument.

***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

There are no prerequisites to the second module of the course.

*Place and time of consultation hours*

Prof. G. Mascheroni: in the first teaching term, Wednesday after class, Department of Communication and Performing Arts, via Sant’Agnese 2, 4th floor.

Prof. L. G. Zaffaroni: Tuesday afternoon, upon appointment, at the Department of Communication and Performing Arts, via Sant’Agnese 2, 4th floor.

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