COMM 340E Communication and Media in the Digital Age

Course Description

This course is intended to provide an introduction to the major social, political, and cultural debates affecting communication and the new media landscapes. Topics include an overview of core concepts in the disciplines of Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, focusing on the connections between elements of the circuit of media. Structure, agency, power, technology, industry, content, and users interact in a global digital context. Understanding these elements is crucial for tackling enduring questions about the media in the digital age, and their overall impact on democracy, ethics, and culture.

Course Goals and Methodology

The main goal of this course is to investigate the complex relationship between media, communication, and culture in a network society. From a social and cultural approach to communication and through the critical study of recent issues and cases, students will gain a clearer understanding of the debates and trends in communication and media in the digital age.

Learning Objectives

Through this course, students will:

- Examine the central role of culture in media and communication studies.
- Trace and discuss the evolution and theories of mass communication and media.
- Reflect upon the crucial role of news and media in democratic societies.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the complex process of transformation of media in the digital context, and its impact on politics, democracy, and culture.
- Review free expression debates in the digital age, focusing on copyright issues, privacy, and security issues.
- Address ethical issues in media representation in a more and more visually oriented culture, focusing on gender, class, and race.
- Gain analytical, critical, and new media skills.

Course Requirements and Grading

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

- Participation (20%)
- Midterm exam (20%)
- Final exam (25%)
- Project (15%)
- Critical response essays (3) (20%)
- Participation *(20%)*

In-class participation will be encouraged at all sessions. Class participation will therefore be graded according to the students' previous work and reflections about the provided material. Active participation means not only attendance (being there ≠ participation) but reading assigned materials before class, providing ideas with relevant basis (properly supported), asking

and answering questions in class, engaging in class discussions and conversations with classmates (embracing active listening), as well as questioning information presented and discussed. Students are also expected to actively participate in in-class exercises and to do homework.

>Rubric
>Participation points will be assigned based on the following criteria: (1) frequency of participation in class, (2) quality of comments, and (3) listening skills.

Exams (45%)

Exams (midterm and final) will cover the topics and questions seen in the course and will test conceptual and critical-thinking skills. Both exams will consist of multiple- choice, short answer, essay, and/or case analysis/reflection questions (*the final exam will <u>NOT</u> be cumulative).

Project (15%)

Students will work in small groups (no more than three/four students) to comply with this assignment. Each group of students will be asked to either present or make a video essay on one topic from a list of suggested topics provided by the professor. In getting ready for this assignment, students should carry out a previous and intensive research on the chosen topic. Every group will get the professor's guidance during the process of research. Every group is expected to produce:

<u>Option A</u>: a clear, concise, and illustrative power point/Google Slides/Prezi **presentation**, on which extra material (images, YouTube videos, website links...) may be included. Time limit for each presentation is 15 minutes; *make sure: a) not to exceed your allotted time, and b) not to present for less than 12 minutes).

<u>Option B</u>: a **video essay** (duration: 8-10 minutes) in which excerpts from documentaries, still images, etc., as well as audio (voice over) you record yourselves are added.

The professor will be available during office hours to solve any questions on the presentations and will also provide information on grading parameters.

Critical response essays (20%)

This assignment is aimed at evaluating your critical and analytical skills. It implies: (1) the understanding of the relevance, the content, and the significance of the case study, and (2) the ability to perform critical thinking and reflect your opinion on the given subject based on what we have discussed in class. This includes the readings, theoretical concepts, videos, images, etc. associated with the assignment (e.g. social world, social imaginaries, agency, structure, the forms of capital, etc.).

<u>Final Grade Expectations:</u> The instructor will use the Spanish 10-point grading scale. The grades that will appear on your final transcript are also Spanish grades.

- Grade A/A- (9-10) — <u>Outstanding</u> performance showing a thorough knowledge and understanding of the topics of the course. The best possible grade.
- Grade B+/B (8-9) — <u>Remarkable</u> performance with general knowledge and understanding of the topics. Next highest.
- Grade B/B- (7-8) — <u>Good</u> performance with general knowledge and understanding of the topics. Indicates high average performance.
- Grade C+/C (6-7) — <u>Fairly</u> good performance showing an understanding of the course on a basic level. Indicates low average performance.
- Grade C/C- (5-6) — <u>Passable</u> performance showing a general and superficial understanding of the course's topics. Lowest passing grade

● Grade F (0-5) – <u>Unsatisfactory</u> performance in all assessed criteria. Failing grade.

Please be aware that anything below a 5 (i.e. a C- on the U.S. scale) is a failing grade. There is no pass/fail option at UPO. If you do not officially withdraw from a class by the withdrawal deadline, a failing grade will appear next to the course name. Check out the Student Handbook for the grade conversion table (some universities may use a slightly different scale).

General Course Policies

Each student is expected to be familiar with the course syllabus. Students are expected to focus their full attention on the class, arrive on time, and stay until class ends. Leaving the classroom on repeated occasions is disturbing to both your professor and your classmates and may adversely affect your participation grade. Please make use of the 10-minute breaks in between classes to fill up your water bottle, use the restroom, etc.

Students are expected to listen and respect other points of view. Phone calls, social media, email, or Internet browsing at any time during class are not acceptable during class except for specific class-related activity expressly approved by your instructor. You are responsible for any and all course material covered in class, announcements, and/or handouts if you are not present for any reason. Students will be held responsible to be up to date by attending class regularly and checking both email and the Blackboard site of the course frequently (monitor your email and Blackboard announcements at least once every 24 hours).

<u>Communicating with instructor</u>: Please allow at least 48 hours for your instructor to respond to your emails. The weekend is not included in this timeframe. If you have an urgent request or question for your professor, be sure to send it during the week.

Attendance and Punctuality

Attendance is mandatory at all classes. As we understand that you might fall ill or be unable to come to class (e.g. due to a religious holiday, a flight delay, a family wedding/reunion, a graduation, a job interview, etc.) at some point during the semester, you are allowed up to 4 absences. You will be responsible for the material covered and any work missed. You will not need to justify your absences (up to 4) in any way unless you miss an exam, a presentation, a quiz, etc. In this case, you must present a doctor's note (signed, stamped and dated) to be able to reschedule the exam, etc. It will still count as an absence, but you will be allowed to retake the exam, etc. We don't encourage you to use all 4 days unless you really need them as your participation grade may suffer if you are not in class. If used unwisely and you get sick late in the semester, the following penalties will apply:

● On your 5th absence, 1 point will be taken off of your final Spanish grade
● On your 6th absence, 3 points will be taken off of your final Spanish grade
● On your 7th absence, you will automatically fail the course

Academic Honesty

Academic integrity is a guiding principle for all academic activity at Pablo de Olavide University. Cheating on exams and plagiarism (which includes copying from the Internet) are clear violations of academic honesty. A student is guilty of plagiarism when he or she presents another person's intellectual property as his or her own. The penalty for plagiarism and cheating is a failing grade for the assignment/exam and a failing grade for the course. The International Center may also report this to your home university. Avoid plagiarism by citing sources properly,

using footnotes and a bibliography, and not cutting and pasting information from various websites when writing assignments.

Learning Accommodations
If you require special accommodations or have any other medical condition you deem may affect your class performance, you must stop by the International Center to speak to Marta Carrillo (mcaroro@acu.upo.es) to either turn in your documentation or to confirm that our office has received it.

Behavior Policy
Students are expected to show integrity and act in a professional and respectful manner at all times. A student's attitude in class may influence his/her participation grade. The professor has a right to ask a student to leave the classroom if the student is unruly or appears intoxicated. If a student is asked to leave the classroom, that day will count as an absence regardless of how long the student has been in class.

Course Contents

1. Media, Communication, and Society
2. The Evolution of Media Technology
3. The Media Industry
4. The Content of the Media
5. From Media Effects to Active Audiences

Required Texts
There is no textbook required for this course. Therefore, students are not expected to purchase any material. The instructor will post the class material (Google Slides, case studies handouts, in-class worksheets, announcements, links, and any additional reading) on Blackboard, which is accessible both on campus and off campus. To log in, you need to sign in on https://campusvirtual.upo.es using the username and password you received in your orientation folder.

The contents of the course are mainly but not only based on the following texts:

- Bagdikian, B. H. (2014). The new media monopoly (20th edition). Boston (MA): Beacon Press.
- Bennett, T., Grossberg, L., Morris, M., & Williams, R. (2005). *New keywords: A revised vocabulary of culture and society*. Malden (MA): Blackwell Pub.
- Berger, P & Luckmann, T. (2006) *The social construction of reality*. Penguin.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241-258). New York: Greenwood Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998) *Masculine domination*. Stanford (CA). Stanford University Press.
- Cammaerts, B. & Carpentier, N. (2007). Introduction. In B. Cammaerts & N. Carpenter (edis.), *Reclaiming the media: Communication rights and expanding democratic media roles* (pp. xi-xviii). Bristol (UK): Intellect Books.
- Castañeda, M. (2018). The power of (mis)representation: Why racial and ethnic stereotypes in the media matter. In H. Jiménez (ed.), *Challenging Inequalities: Readings in Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration*, (pp. 200-207). Cognella.

- Castells, M. (2023). The network society revisited. *American Behavioral Scientist, 67(7) 940–946.*
- Chakravartty, P. & Schiller, D. (2010). Neoliberal newspeak and digital capitalism in crisis. *International Journal of Communication, 4, 670-692.*
- Croteau, D., & Hoynes, W. (2019). *Media/society: technology, industries, content, and users (Sixth edition).* Thousand Oaks (CA): SAGE.
- Curran, J., & Hesmondhalgh, D. (Eds.). (2019). *Media and society (6th edition).* London (UK): Bloomsbury.
- Douglas, S. J. (2010). *The rise of enlightened sexism: How pop culture took us from girl power to girls gone wild.* New York (MA): St. Martin's Griffin.
- Durham, M. G., & Kellner, D. (2006). *Media and cultural studies: Keyworks.* Malden (MA): Blackwell.
- Gauntlett, D. (2008). *Media, gender and identity: An introduction* (2nd ed.). London (UK): Routledge.
- Hall, S. W. (1980). Encoding/decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies* (pp. 63-87). London (UK): Hutchinson.
- Hall. S. (1992). Race, culture, and communications: Looking backward and forward at cultural studies. *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture, and Society,* 5 (1), 10-18.
- Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices.* London (UK): Sage & the Open University.
- Hartley, J. (2002). *Communication, cultural and media studies: The key concepts.* New York (NY): Routledge.
- Kelly, K. (2017). *The inevitable. Understanding the 12 technological forces that will shape our future.* New York (NY): Viking.
- Kellner, D. (2020). *Media culture: Cultural studies identity and politics in the contemporary momen*t. New York (NY): Routledge.
- McQuail, D. (2010). *Mass communication theory.* London (UK): SAGE.
- Morozov, E. (2012). *The net delusion: How not to liberate the world.* Penguin.
- Nagle, A. (2017). *Kill all normies: Online culture wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the alt-right.* Zero Books.
- Nightingale, V. (Ed.). (2011). *The Handbook of media audiences.* Malden (MA): Wiley-Blackwell.
- O'Neil, C. (2016). *Weapons of math destruction.* New York (NY): Crown.
- O'Sullivan, T., & Jewkes, Y. (Eds.). (1997). *The media studies reader.* London (UK): Arnold.
- Perse, E. M., & Lambe, J. L. (2017). *Media effects and society.* New York (NY): Routledge.
- Rayner, P., Wall, P., & Kruger, S. (2004). *Media studies: The essential resource.* New York (NY): Routledge.
- Ritzer, G., Dean, P., & Jurgenson, N. (2012). The coming of age of the prosumer, *American Behavioral Scientist*, *56*(4) 379–398.
- Rojas, F. (2017) *Theory for the working sociologist.* New York (NY): Columbia University Press.
- Taylor, A. (2014). *The people's platform: Taking back power and culture in the digital age.* New York (NY): Metropolitan Books.
- Turow, J. (2017). *Media today: Mass communication in a converging world* (6th ed.). New York (NY): Routledge.

- Tüfekçi, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest*. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press.
- Williams, K. (2003). *Understanding media theory*. Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press.
- Wood, J. T. (2011). *Gendered lives: Communication, gender, and lives* (9[th]ed.). Nelson Education. Boston (MA): Wadsworth.

Course Schedule

I.	MEDIA, COMMUNICATION, AND SOCIETY

Wed. D1		Introductions. Course syllabus. Introductory activity	
Mon. D2		Models of communication media. A model of media and the social world. Network society	📖 Castells (2023), pp. 940-946
Wed. D3		Structure and agency in the media	📖 Croteau & Haynes (2012), pp. 20-25
Fri. D4		The forms of capital	📖 Bourdieu (1986), pp. 241-258

II.	THE EVOLUTION OF MEDIA TECHNOLOGY

Mon. D5		From print to the Internet	ⓘ Critical Response Essay 1
Wed. D6		Technological determinism and social constructionism. McLuhan versus Postman	🎥 Watch *The Medium Is the Message* (9:05 min.)

III.	THE MEDIA INDUSTRY

Mon. D7		Have digital communication technologies democratized the media industries? Social Media and a (New) Public Sphere: A Participatory Culture?	🎥 Watch *Digital Disconnect* (on Kanopy) (63 min.)
Wed. D8		Concentration of ownership, media control, and political power	📖 Chakravartty & Schiller (2010), pp. 672-676
Mon. D9		Media regulation, free speech, and democracy	📖 Cammaerts & Carpentier (2007), pp. xi-xvii
Wed. D10		Regulating access and distribution. Net neutrality. Media Justice Movement	📖 Media Justice Movement ☑ Project- Topic 🎥 Watch *What Is Net Neutrality?* (4:43 min.)
Mon. D11		Media prosumers	📖 Ritzer et al. (2012), pp. 379-389

Wed. D12		🗋 **Midterm exam**

IV. THE CONTENT OF THE MEDIA

Mon. D13		Media and ideology. Cultural hegemony. Representation. The Society of the Spectacle	🎬 Hall (1997), *Representation and media* (8:32 min.)
Wed. D14		Media and ideology. Cultural hegemony. Representation. The Society of the Spectacle (cont.).	📖 Hall, p. 7 (hegemony)
Mon. D15		Race and media representation	📖 Hall (1992), pp. 10-18
Wed.		***NO CLASSES***	
Mon. D16		Gender and media representation	🎬 Kilbourne (*Killing Us Softly 4*) on Kanopy (45min.)
Wed. D17		Social class and media representation	📖 Kellner & Share (2019), pp.1-6
Mon. D18		LGBT media representation	📖 Explore https://glaad.org/ ⓘ Critical Response Essay 2

IV. FROM MEDIA EFFECTS TO ACTIVE AUDIENCES

Wed. D19		Propaganda. Early media effects theories	🎬 Watch *Evolution of Media Theories* (15:25 min.)
Mon. D20		Agenda setting and framing. The Spiral of silence. Cultivation theory	🎬 Watch *Evolution of Media Theories II* (16:53) 🎬 Watch *Evolution of Media Theories III* (10:25)
Wed. D21		Encoding/decoding: Balancing agency and structure	📖 Hall (1980), pp. 51-61
Mon. D22		Audiencing in the XXI century	📖 Nightingale (2011) pp. 1-15
Wed. D23		Media and embodiment	📖 Gill (2021), pp. 1-5

Mon. D24		Online media influence. The mediatization of society and politics. Filter bubbles. Echo chamber	📖 "Cambridge Analytica and Facebook" (2018)
Wed.		***NO CLASSES***	
Mon. D25		**Final Project presentations I**	ⓘ Critical Response Essay 3 🖼 Final project (slides or video)
Wed. D26		**Final Project presentations II**	

	📄 **FINAL EXAM.**

*This syllabus is subject to change.