

# Introduction to The Political Economy of Media

Course Code: ZUR589p

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FSS MU

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## Course outline:

The course introduces students to political economy approaches to the study of media and mediated communication. A political economy approach is characterized by the study of social relations, above all power relations, that constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources, in the case of this course particularly focussing on communication resources. We will explore how the communication business operates, for example, how communications products move through a chain of producers to wholesalers, retailers, and, finally consumers, whose purchases, rentals, and attention are fed back into new processes of production. We will also explore political and economic processes that impact on the media, such as funding models and regulatory frameworks. Throughout we will analyze the ways in which the unequal distribution of material and symbolic resources impact on communication activities and how the funding and organization of cultural products influence the range of discourses and representations as well as access to these.

## Assessment:

There are two assessments on this course, a commodity analysis (2,000 words) and a corporation profile (1,000 words). Both assessments are due on **Friday 17 June 2019**. There are also three written tasks that you need to submit after the (condensed) teaching on the course is finished. We will discuss the assessments and written tasks in detail in Session 5, if you can't come to Session 5, please talk to

me while I am in Brno or email me for advice on your assessments. You will also find more details about the assessments further in this course syllabus. **Please remember to confirm your choice of a commodity and a corporation with me.**

### **Session 1: Introduction to the course. Which political economy of the media?**

**Tuesday 23 April 2019 10 – 11:40 Studio 527**

The course will - as usual - begin with an introduction that will explain the topics covered, the readings and the assessments. We will also explore what exactly the political economy of the media as a field of research is and we will at least briefly consider the different schools of thought that have emerged, particularly there is a difference between the North American tradition of political economy of the media and the European one.

#### Compulsory reading:

Chapter 1 in Mosco, V. (2009) *The Political Economy of Communication*. London: Sage.

#### Additional readings:

Calabrese, A. (2005). "Communication, global justice and the moral economy." *Global media and communication*. 1(3).

Castells, M. (1998) *The information age: Economy, society and culture at the end of millennium*. Oxford. Blackwell.

Meehan, E. and Wasko, J. (2013) "In Defence of a Political Economy of the media", *Javnost – The Public*, 20(1).

### **Session 2: Media and Society**

**Tuesday 23 April 2019 12:00 – 13:40 U23**

The role of media in society has been understood in a variety of ways. In this session we consider in depth the narratives that have developed around the roles of media in democratic societies historically. Our focus will be mainly on the liberal and radical narratives but we will also consider some alternative approaches.

Compulsory reading:

Curran, J. (2011) Chapter 8 “Narratives of media history revisited” in *Media and Democracy*. London: Routledge.

Additional readings:

“Chapter 2 The libertarian theory of the press” and “Chapter 3 The social responsibility of the press” In Siebert, F. S., Peterson, T. and Schramm, W. (1956) *Four Theories of The Press: The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should Be and Do*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

“A Propaganda Model” In Herman, E. a Chomsky, N.: *Manufacturing Consent*. Pantheon 1988.

“Defining Media Events” In Dayan, D. a Katz, E.: *Media Events*. Harvard University Press 1992.

van Zoonen, L.: “Feminist Perspectives on the Media.” In Curran, J. a Gurevitch, M.: *Mass Media and Society*. London: Arnold 1996.

**Session 3: Media Industries & Session 4: Who Owns the Media?**

**Wednesday 24 April 2019 12:00 – 15:40 AVC**

**Session 3: Media Industries**

We have already discussed the various ways in which media's roles in society are understood. In this session the focus will be on media as industries, these industries operate on so-called dual markets, compete among themselves for audiences' time and money and despite much industry effort at predicting the success of media products such as films, their results remain difficult to predict.

Compulsory reading:

Doyle, G. Chapter 1 “Introduction to Media Economics.” In Doyle, G. (2005) *Understanding media economics*. London: Sage.

Additional readings:

Garnham, N. (2005) 'From Cultural to Creative Industries: An Analysis of the Implications of the "Creative Industries" Approach to Arts and Media Policy Making in the United Kingdom', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 11(1), 15–29.

Picard, R. (2005) 'Unique Characteristics and Business Dynamics of Media Products', *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 2(2), 61–9.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2013) *The Cultural Industries*, 3rd edn (London: Sage).

#### **Session 4: Who Owns the Media?**

The importance of understanding media ownership is self-evident. How are media owned in democratic societies? How is ownership regulated? Is market competition the best guarantee of media fulfilling societal obligations? How is ownership and its regulation changing in the context of globalization? These are some of the questions that we will explore in this session. We will be looking at a range of examples mainly from the US and European countries, including the recent battle for net neutrality.

##### Compulsory reading:

J. Curran (May 2002) 'Global Media Concentration: Shifting the Argument', *Open Democracy*, [https://www.opendemocracy.net/media-globalmediaownership/article\\_37.jsp](https://www.opendemocracy.net/media-globalmediaownership/article_37.jsp) date accessed 18 February 2019.

##### Additional readings:

Bagdikian, B. (2004) *The New Media Monopoly: A Completely Revised and Updated Edition With Seven New Chapters*, 20th edn (Boston: Beacon Press).

J. Banks (1997) 'MTV and the Globalization of Popular Culture', *International Communication Gazette*, 59(1), 43–60.

C. Chris (2006) 'Can You Repeat That? Patterns of Media Ownership and the "Repurposing" Trend', *The Communication Review*, 9(1), 63–84.

#### **Session 5: Researching Commodities and Media Organizations**

**Thursday 25 April 2019 16:00 – 17:40 U34**

This is an applied session in which we will conduct some hands-on-analyses based on data available online. There are no readings for this session. **IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU BRING YOUR IDEAS FOR THE ASSESSMENTS TO THIS SESSION.**

**Session 6: Globalization of News Industries: From the Telegraph to Al Jazeera**

**Thursday 25 April 2019 18:00 – 19:40 U41**

We have already touched upon the importance of globalization when exploring developments in the media industries. In order to deepen our understanding of issues at stake, in this session we focus particularly on global news flows. Does the emergence of broadcasters such as Al Jazeera signal the emergence of a contra-flow of news (from the global South to the so-called developed countries)? Or does the dominance of a handful of news agencies on the global news market continue?

Compulsory reading:

E. Segev (2015) 'Visible and Invisible Countries: News Flow Theory Revised', *Journalism*, 15(3), 412–28.

Sakr, N. "Challenger or Lackey?: The Politics of News on Al Jazeera" In Thussu, D. K. (2007) (ed.) *Media on the Move: Global Flow and Contra-Flow* (London: Routledge).

Additional readings:

Y. Ozohu-Suleiman (2014) 'War Journalism on Israel/ Palestine: Does Contra-Flow Really Make a Difference?', *Media, War & Conflict*, 7(1), 85–103.

Painter, J. (2008) *Counter-Hegemonic News: A Case Study of Al-Jazeera English and Telesur* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism).

Figenschou, T. U. (2014) *Al Jazeera and the Global Media Landscape: The South Is Talking Back* (New York: Routledge).

M. Wojcieszak (2007) 'Al Jazeera: A Challenge to Traditional Framing Research', *The International Communication Gazette*, 69(2), 115–28.

**Session 7: Rise of The Prosumer: Democratization of Media Content Making or Labour for Free? & Session 8: Media Professionals: Autonomous, Creative and Diverse?**

**Friday 26 April 2018 12:00 – 15:40 AVC**

**Session 7: Rise of The Prosumer: Democratization of Media Content Making or Labour for Free?**

In this session our attention turns to the emergence of user-generated content which has also been termed as the rise of the prosumer (the merging of the producer and consumer). The key question that we consider is whether this move leads to greater democratization of the production of media content (and greater power on part of the consumers) or it is a development reluctantly embraced by mainstream media and understood mainly as resulting in free contents.

Compulsory reading:

Goode, L. (2009) "Social news, citizen journalism and democracy," *New Media and Society*, 11(8).

Kperogi, F. (2011) "Cooperation with the corporation? CNN and the hegemonic cooptation of citizen journalism through iReport.com." *New Media and Society*, 13(2).

Additional readings:

Redden, J. and Witschge, T. Chapter 10 "A new news order? Online news content examined." In Fenton, N. (ed.) (2009) *New Media, Old News: Journalism and Democracy in the Digital Age*. London: Routledge.

Freedman, D. Chapter 2 "The political economy of the 'new' news environment." In Fenton, N. (ed.) (2009) *New Media, Old News: Journalism and Democracy in the Digital Age*. London: Routledge.

Harrison, J. (2010) "User-generated content and gatekeeping at the BBC hub," *Journalism Studies*, 11(2).

## **Session 8: Media Professionals: Autonomous, Creative and Diverse?**

Images of media professionals that we are used to seeing in popular culture relate to independent journalists who are tirelessly seeking the truth, autonomous script writers whose genius is in the end recognized by the industry. Also, in fictional representations – at least recent ones – we are used to seeing ethnically and gender diverse groups of professionals. Do studies of the political economy of the media confirm that these fictional worlds of media professionals actually exist in contemporary democratic societies?

### Compulsory reading:

Pritchard, D. and Stonbely, S. (2007) 'Racial Profiling in the Newsroom', *J&MC Quarterly*, 84(2), 231–48.

### Additional readings:

DeBruin, M. (2000) "Gender, organizational and professional identities in journalism," *Journalism*, 1(2).

I. Awad (2011) 'Latinas/os and the Mainstream Press: The Exclusions of Professional Diversity', *Journalism*, 12(5), 515–32.

Browne, D. E. (2005) *Ethnic Minorities, Electronic Media and the Public Sphere: A Comparative Approach* (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press).

### **Assessments:**

Three written tasks – each of these makes up 5% of your final grade:

#### 1. Summary of a journal article (300 words)

Find a journal article that deals with a topic related to the course and write a brief summary of the main points: What are the research questions? What is the methodology? What are the main findings?

**The deadline for this written task is Friday 3 May 2019**

#### 2. Profile of a political economist of media (1 page, this can be either a text or bullet points)

Select a political economist of the media – can be from your country or someone we have talked about in the course – and write his/her brief profile focusing on their academic work.

**The deadline for this written task is Friday 17 May 2019**

3. Outline of a research project that is connected to what you learnt on the course (500 words)

What topic/phenomenon would you research? What research question/s would you study? What methodology would you use? What would be your sample? Etc.

**The deadline for this written task is Friday 31 May 2019**

**Please note that there is no problem with sending me the written tasks earlier.**

Main assessments:

1. Commodity Analysis (2,000 words) – this makes up 50% of your final grade

For this assessment you will select a particular media commodity and explore how it fits within a broader system of production. For example, you may be interested in Star Wars and you will explore the franchise, these are questions that you will need to answer in relation to your chosen commodity (please note that it is not always possible to answer all these questions or they may be others that you will want to include):

- Historical/contextual information for the commodity.
- Who or what company holds the copyright or patent for the commodity?
- What company or companies produced the commodity? Who owns that company?
- How was/is the commodity distributed?
- What company or companies distribute the commodity? Who owns that company?
- How much does the commodity cost to produce?
- How/where is the commodity consumed?
- What is the role of advertising in this commodity's chain?
- Is the commodity available in other forms?
- Is this commodity distributed locally, regionally, nationally, and/or internationally?



Please note that you will be expected to make some references to the readings/discussion that we have on this course, for example, in relation to the role of advertising or globalization.

## 2. Corporation Profile (1,000 words) – this makes up 35% of your final grade

For this assessment you need to research a corporation, company or other organization associated with communications or media/cultural industries. You should gather as much information as possible about your chosen organization and analyze it in light of the readings and discussions that we have done.

Your profile should include (if available):

- brief history or background information
- discussion of organization, operations, policies
- basic financial information (revenues, assets, income, number of stockholders, stockholder equity, share of industry revenue, etc.)
- internationalization
- an outline, map, or other visual representation of the organization's structure (its parent company, divisions, subsidiaries, and any major partnerships). This will be discussed further in class.
- At the end of your analysis, you should be able to answer the question, “what is the primary business of this organization?”

Your profile should include the written account (1,000 words) and appendices that provide an illustration of your organization's structure and relationships with other organizations (possibly also outside the fields of media/communications/cultural industries). Please note that you need to provide references and while you can use Wikipedia and company websites as your starting point, you should also use other sources.

**We will discuss the assessments further in Session 5, please make sure that you confirm with me which commodity and organization you are going to profile. You should email your assessments to me.**

### Other readings and sources:

Baker, C.E. (2002). *Media, markets and democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boyd-Barrett, O. (1980) *The International News Agencies* (The University of Michigan: Constable).

Boyd-Barrett, O. and Rantanen, T. (1999) *The Globalization of News* (London: Sage).

S. Braman (April 2004) 'Where has Media Policy Gone? Defining the Field in the Twenty-first Century', *Communication Law and Policy*, 9(2), 153–82.

J. K. Chalaby (2005) 'From Internationalization to Transnationalization', *Global Media and Communication*, 1(1), 28–33.

Cooper, M. (2003). *Media ownership and democracy in the digital information age*. Stanford: Centre for Internet and Society, Stanford Law School.

Cottle, S. (2009) *Global crisis reporting: Journalism in the global age*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Creedon, P. (1993) *Women in mass communication*. London: Sage.

Curran, J. & Gurevitch, M. (2005) *Mass media and society*. Hodder.

Curran, J. (2002) *Media and power*. London: Routledge.

Curran, J. (2011) *Media and democracy*. London: Routledge.

Davis, A. (2010) *Political communication and social theory*. London: Routledge.

Davis, A. (2013) *Promotional Cultures: The Rise and Spread of Advertising, Public Relations, Marketing and Branding* (Cambridge: Polity).

McQuail, D. and Siune, K. (eds.) (1998) *Media policy: Convergence, concentration and commerce*. London: Sage.

Morozov, E. (2011) *The net delusion: How not to liberate the world*. London: Allen Lane.

Pariser, E. (2011) *The filter bubble: What the Internet is hiding from you*. London: Viking.

K. Watanabe (2013) 'The Western Perspective in Yahoo! News and Google News: Quantitative Analysis of Geographic Coverage of Online News', *International Communication Gazette*, 75(2), 141–56.

Xin, X. (2011) 'Web 2.0, citizen journalism and social justice in China.' In G. Meikle and G. Redden (eds.) *News online: Transformations and continuities*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.