

## **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 in Spain and the US. Topics include an overview of the historical development and main theories of mass communication, and examine critical issues of the digital age such as the rise of citizen journalism, the emergence of social media, the growing role of grassroots movements, copyright and free expression issues, media representation issues, and their overall impact on democracy, ethics and culture. Conducted in English.

### **Course Goals and Methodology**

The main goal of this course is to investigate the complex relationship between media and culture in the network society. Classes consist of lectures and class discussions. Students are encouraged to use a Blackboard site, where the professor posts slides, lecture notes, journal articles, assignment instructions, announcements and additional resources such as films and other audiovisual material. From a cultural approach to communication and through the critical study of a number of recent issues and cases (e.g. the net neutrality issue, the *indignados* movement in Spain, the Edward Snowden case, the remix culture, etc.), students will gain a clearer understanding of the debates and trends in communication and media in the digital age. Ultimately, the goal of this course is to help students become acquainted with the new media literacies as well as become more insightful prosumers, more informed digital citizens, and more critical individuals.

### **Learning Objectives**

Through this course, students will:

- ☐ Look at the central role of culture in media and communication studies
- ☐ Trace and discuss the evolution and theories of mass communication and media
- ☐ Examine the crucial role of news and media in democratic societies
- ☐ Consider the growth of digital media activism and the power of social media
- ☐ 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 and race
- ☐ Gain analytical, critical, and new media skills

## Required Texts

There is no textbook required for this course. However, there are required readings that will be available from the Blackboard site of the course. We will use a number of book chapters, academic articles, and new stories. Be sure to read the material assigned for each session. Check out the *Course Contents* section where all readings are indicated for each class.

## Course Requirements and Grading

### Participation & Readings (15%)

Students are required to actively discuss and come prepared to class, keeping current with the readings provided by the professor. In-class discussions will be encouraged at all sessions. Likewise, students may be required to participate and engage in discussions in the Blackboard course site. Class participation will therefore be graded according to the students' previous readings and reflections about the provided texts and shown screenings. Active participation means not only attendance (*being there* participation) but discussion with relevant basis (text-based and not just random personal experience and background), asking and answering questions in class and in Blackboard, engaging in class and online discussions and dialogues with class mates, questioning information presented and discussed. Students are expected to keep current with the readings and come to class prepared to discuss the assignment.

### Quizzes (x2) (15%)

Students are required to complete 2 quizzes (covering from Unit 1 to Unit 3) that will be scheduled within the first half of the semester (see the course schedule below). These tests are aimed at evaluating the students' knowledge of the different topics covered. The quizzes will be based on the information from the readings and the material presented and discussed in class. It may include multiple-choice questions, true or false questions, definitions, or short questions.

### Debates (x2) (15%)

There will be 2 in-class pro/con debates (Unit 6 and Unit 7). Every student will be expected to do some research around certain dilemmas, and participate in each debate. The debate topic will be distributed in advance, and the "pro" and "con" sides will be assigned.

Students will then have to plan with their team by developing arguments for their assigned position, as well as by anticipating arguments for their opponents' position and developing responses.

### Papers (x4) (20%)

Students are required to write 4 papers, approximately 2-3 pages long each. Students receive recommended essay questions from the professor in order to test students' ability to establish thoughtful reactions regarding the topics covered. Papers must be submitted electronically via Blackboard. Papers submitted by email or in paper will not be accepted. Format: PDF submitted via Blackboard (only). Use 11-point Times New Roman or Arial font, double-spaced paragraphs.

### In Pairs / Small Group Presentation (15%)

Students are required to prepare a 10-minute oral presentation (in pairs or small groups) on an assigned topic or a reading throughout the course. On the day of their presentation each student has to submit an outline and a one-page summary of their part of the presentation. Students will be graded individually. Outline and summary are expected to

be submitted electronically via Blackboard. Those texts submitted by email or in paper will not be accepted. Format: PDF submitted via Blackboard (only). Use 11-point Times New Roman or Arial font, double-spaced paragraphs.

### Cumulative Final Exam (20%)

The final exam evaluates students' ability to critically write on the material covered in class, and to make thought-provoking links among the different topics discussed. The test will consist on a 4-page long essay on one of the different topics that the professor will previously announce in class. The date of the final exam cannot be changed.

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

	15% — Participation
	15% — Quizzes (x2)
	15% — Debates (x2)
	20% — Papers (x4)
	15% — Group presentation
	20% — Final exam

### Grade Conversion Scale:

Spanish Grade:	10	9.5-9.9	9 -9.4	8.5-8.9	8-8.4	7.5-7.9	7-7.4	6.5-6.9	6-6.4	5.5-5.9	5-5.4	0-4.9
U.S. grade:	A+	A	A-	B+	B	B	B-	C+	C	C	C-	F

### **General Course Policies**

Students are expected to turn off and put away mobile phones. Computers are ok but strictly limited to learning purposes. Students are not allowed to eat in the classroom. Please eat before or after class.

### **Attendance and Punctuality**

Attendance is mandatory. More than 3 unexcused absences will result in the lowering of the final grade. Students with more than 2 such absences may not challenge the final grade received. Punctuality is required – lateness will be penalized by ½absence (over 15 mins) or 1 absence (over 30 mins).

No classes will be held on the following days:

- ☐ *Día de Andalucía* – Tuesday, Feb. 28
- ☐ *Semana Santa* – April 10- 14
- ☐ *Feria de Abril* – April 30-May 5

### **Academic Dishonesty**

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. Avoid plagiarism by citing sources properly (using footnotes or endnotes and a bibliography).

**Students with Disabilities**

If you have a disability that requires special academic accommodation, please speak to your professor within the first three weeks of the semester in order to discuss any adjustments. It is the student's responsibility to provide the International Center with documentation confirming the disability and the accommodations required (if you have provided this to your study abroad organization, they have most likely informed the International Center already but please confirm).

**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**

Unit 1. Introduction to Communication and Media Studies

Unit 2. A Brief History of Communication and Mass Media

Unit 3. Theories of Mass Communication

Unit 4. The Media Industry's Transformation

Unit 5. Social Media and a (New) Public Sphere

Unit 6. The Digital Age: A Participatory Culture?

Unit 7. On Transparency and Freedom of Speech in the Digital Age

Unit 8. The "Copyright Wars" and the Remix Culture

## Course Schedule

### UNIT 1

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**CLASS #1 Thursday, January 26**

Course introduction, syllabus overview, and course expectations: main goals, course policies, requirements, evaluation guidelines, and grading.

**CLASS #2 Tuesday, January 31**

Introduction to Communication and Media Studies

*Reading:* McLuhan, 'Introduction'; 'The Medium is the Message'; and 'The Gadget Lover: Narcissus as Narcosis' In *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*

### UNIT 2

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**CLASS #3 Thursday, February 2**

A Brief History of Communication and Mass Media

*Reading:* McQuail (2010) 'The Rise of Mass Media' In *Mass Communication Theory*

**CLASS #4 Tuesday, February 7**

A Brief History of Communication and Mass Media

*Screening:* *The Machine that Made Us* (Stephen Fry, 2008, 59 min.)

**CLASS #5 Thursday, February 9**

A Brief History of Communication and Mass Media

*Reading:* Flichy, P. (2006) "New media history", In L. Lievrouw and S. Livingstone (eds), *The Handbook of New Media*

### UNIT 3

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**CLASS #6 Tuesday, February 14**

Theories of Mass Communication: Media Effects

*Reading:* McQuail (2010) 'Processes and models of media effects' In *Mass Communication Theory*

<b>QUIZ 1 (UNIT 1&amp;UNIT 2)</b>
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**CLASS #7 Thursday, February 16**

Theories of Mass Communication: Media Effects

*Reading:* McQuail (2010) 'Social-Cultural Effects' In *Mass Communication Theory*

**CLASS #8 Tuesday, February 21**

Theories of Mass Communication: Media Effects

*Reading:* McQuail (2010) 'News, Public Opinion and Political Communication' In *Mass Communication Theory*

*Reading:* *Ten things wrong with the media effects model*

<http://www.theory.org.uk/david/effects.htm>

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## UNIT 4

**CLASS #9 Thursday, February 23**

The Media Industry's Transformation (The New York Times, USA)

Screening: *Page One: Inside The New York Times* (Andrew Rossi, 2011, 1h 40m) (part 1)

**QUIZ 2 (UNIT 3)**
**CLASS #10 Thursday, March 2**

The Media Industry's Transformation (The New York Times, USA)

Screening: *Page One: Inside The New York Times* (Andrew Rossi, 2011, 1h 40m) (part 2)

Reading: Taylor (2014) "What We Want" In *The People's Platform. Taking Back Power and Culture in the Digital Age*

**CLASS #11 Tuesday, March 7**

The Media Industry's Transformation (eldiario.es, Spain)

Reading: Bécquer Seguí and Sebastiaan Faber (2015) "The Spanish Media Are the Worst in Europe. These Upstarts Are Trying to Change That"

<https://www.thenation.com/article/the-spanish-media-are-the-worst-in-europe-these-upstarts-are-trying-to-change-that>

Reading: Juan Luis Sánchez (2016) "Your Predictions Are Our Present"

<http://www.niemanlab.org/2016/12/your-predictions-are-our-present/>

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## UNIT 5

**CLASS #12 Thursday, March 9**

Social Media and a (New) Public Sphere

Reading: Habermas (1964) *The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article*

Reading: Shirky (2011) "The political power of social media" In *Foreign Affairs*

**PAPER 1 DUE**
**CLASS #13 Tuesday, March 14**

Social Media and a (New) Public Sphere

Reading : Papacharissi (2002) "The Virtual Sphere: The Internet As a Public Sphere" In *New Media & Society*

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## UNIT 6

**CLASS #14 Thursday, March 16**

The Digital Age: A Participatory Culture?

Reading: Taylor (2014) "Unequal uptake" In *The People's Platform. Taking Back Power and Culture in the Digital Age*

**CLASS #15 Tuesday, March 21**

The Digital Age: A Participatory Culture?

Reading : Morozov (2010) "Why Kierkegaard hates slacktivism" In *The net delusion: How not to liberate the world*

*Reading:* Jenkins (2013) "What constitutes meaningful participation" In *Spreadable Media. Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*

**CLASS #16 Thursday, March 23**

The Digital Age: A Participatory Culture?

*Reading:* Tufekci, Zeynep. (2014). "Social Movements and Governments in the Digital Age: Evaluating a Complex Landscape" In *Journal of International Affairs* Working in groups to prepare pro-con debate

**CLASS #17 Tuesday, March 28**

The Digital Age: A Participatory Culture?

DEBATE 1 + PAPER 2 DUE
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**UNIT 7**

**CLASS #18 Thursday, March 30**

On Transparency and Freedom of Speech in the Digital Age

**CLASS #19 Tuesday, April 4**

On Transparency and Freedom of Speech in the Digital Age

*Case study:* Edward Snowden and the NSA spying scandal

*Screening:* *Citizenfour* (Laura Poitras, 2014) (Excerpt)

Working in groups to prepare pro-con debate

**CLASS #20 Thursday, April 6**

On Transparency and Freedom of Speech in the Digital Age

DEBATE 2 + PAPER 3 DUE
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**UNIT 8**

**CLASS #21 Tuesday, April 18**

The "Copyright Wars"

*Reading:* Lessig (2014) "Remix: How Creativity Is Being Strangled by the Law" In Mandiberg, *The Social Media Reader*

**CLASS #22 Thursday, April 20**

The "Copyright Wars"

*Reading:* Taylor (2014) "The Double Anchor" In *The People's Platform. Taking Back Power and Culture in the Digital Age*

**CLASS #23 Tuesday, April 25**

The "Copyright Wars"

*Screening:* *RIP: A Remix Manifesto (part 1)*

**CLASS #24 Thursday, April 27**

Remix Culture

*Screening:* *RIP: A Remix Manifesto (part 2)*

**CLASS #25 Tuesday, May 9**

Remix Culture

**PAPER 4 DUE****CLASS #26 Thursday, May 11**

Final exam review

**FINAL EXAM (tba)**

*NB: The class schedule may be subject to change, depending on the direction of class conversations. Changes, if any, will be announced in class. Students will be held responsible to be up to date by attending to class regularly and checking the Blackboard site of the course frequently.*