J382 Media Sociology, Spring 2015

Course: #07880 Wednesday 12 to 3:00, CMA A3.130

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The course title is general, but broadly speaking we are concerned with how media logics develops that convey, shape, and define public life, and how these logics are tied to social structures: political, economic, and cultural. The logic of journalism is the most directly relevant to the political communication process and receives the most attention, but the current issues for research that concern us include conceptualizations of media production, measuring media logics (framing), globalization, and the closely related issues of the new media (cyberspace). The broad course domain is also characterized by the subfield ICA Encyclopedia of Communication heading: “Media Production & Content.” The goals of the class include the following:

• To introduce research on media content and influences on it, otherwise known as media sociology
• To identify different theoretical frameworks helpful in connecting symbolic to media structures, especially in the emerging online and news innovation space
• Stimulate your own theoretical thinking through group activity, an original paper and class discussion
• To find ways to make sense of and apply these conceptual frameworks to present discussions of professional issues, including media bias and press performance

Download: School of Journalism academic ethics policy

Texts


Other required readings: (available in pdf format on Canvas)

Reust (Eds.) Festschrift für Klaus Schönbach. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.


**Recommended**

**Articles and chapters** (available in pdf format on Canvas)


**Books**

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**Schedule**

**Date**  **Topic and readings (to be read by)**

**Getting Ready: some oldies but goodies**

Jan. 21  **Training the sociological imagination:**
*Introductions, getting ideas, critiquing ideas, ethically*

Waisbord (2014)
Gitlin (1978)
Mills (1959)

School ethics statement
[http://journalism.utexas.edu/sites/journalism.utexas.edu/files/attachments/graduate/academic-ethics-policy.pdf](http://journalism.utexas.edu/sites/journalism.utexas.edu/files/attachments/graduate/academic-ethics-policy.pdf)
Be prepared to discuss questions and suggested additions to ethics policy

GTD: reflections on academic productivity
“Profhacks” guide
Hyperactivity essay

**The basics: The Hierarchy of Influences**

Jan. 28  **Historical context and framework of study**

*Mediating the Message in 21st Century*, chapters 1 and 2
Also see related versions: Reese & Ballinger (2001) and Reese (2001)

Feb. 4  **Individual level, “Who is a journalist?”**

MM21 chapter 8
Hanitzsch et al. (2011)  

Feb. 11  Routines  
MM21 chapter 7  
Tuchman (1973)  
Breed (1955)

Feb. 18  Organizational  
MM21 chapter 6  
Bantz et al. (1980)  
Lee & Chan (2009)  
Reese (2009) Gans chapter

Feb. 25  Social institutions  
MM21 chapter 5  
Benson (2004)  
Benson (2006)  
Ryfe (2006)  
Ryfe & Blach-Orsten (2011)

March 4  Social system/ideological/ boundary work  
MM21 chapter 4  
Carlson (2015)  
Coddington (2012)  
Reese (1990)

Current issues: shifting views of people, structures, sites

March 11  Geography of media sociology: Comparative & globalization issues  
Berglez (2008)  
Corcoran & Fahy (2009)  
Reese (2008)  
Reese (2010)

Thinking conceptually: Concept explication due (see assignments)

Mar. 18  Spring break, no class

March 25  Big data, computational and algorithmic journalism
April 1  
*Ethnography for online journalism*

Anderson (2012)  
Lewis & Westlund (2014)  
Lewis & Usher (2013)  
Gillespie (2013)

April 8  
*Case ethnography: the Philadelphia news ecosystem*

Anderson (2013), read remainder of volume

**What's new: Critiquing recent empirical examples**

Note: I presume that the articles you select below from the “recent literature” (post-2012) will be central and relevant to your paper. Check with me before finalizing your selection and be sure to send them to me electronically for posting on Canvas by April 10th.

April 15  
*Review of recent literature (class member led)*

*(paper drafts due)*

April 22  
*Review of recent literature (class member led)*

April 29  
*Paper presentations*

May 6  
*Paper presentations*

**Final paper deadline: TBA**

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**Assignments and grading**

The bulk of your performance will be based on your ability to contribute to and finish an original research project, suitable for conference presentation and/or publication. This obviously will depend on your ability to learn the relevant literature, synthesize those aspects relevant to your research, pose appropriate research questions and hypotheses, identify appropriate methods and materials for analysis, and writing up the results. Regular attendance is assumed, of course. The following tasks will be scheduled:
Discussion leading (10%): prepare handout for class based on class readings for a given day as assigned that helps identify key issues in theory and method and help lead discussion on those readings.

Concept explanation (10%): Identify a key concept within the domain of media sociology (approved in advance by instructor) and provide a two-page explication, as discussed in McLeod & Pan (2005, p. 27): identify concept, search literature, examine empirical properties, develop conceptual definition, define it operationally. This will be good preparation for the research critique and final paper.

Research critique presented in class (20%): Identify key research article relevant to project for critique and presentation in class (2 page write-up; make handouts to distribute in class). Discuss its relevance, theory, method, strengths and weaknesses, assumptions, etc. These articles will presumably be helpful in updating our class readings and adding to the class bibliography. Be sure to provide full citation and PDF file to the instructor by Monday of the week in question to distribute to the class.

Research proposal (20%): Prepare 5 to 7 page double-spaced paper that identifies a key media sociology question and issue, reviews relevant literature, suggests appropriate data and ways to access them, and suggest analytic approaches for coding, categorization, etc. Include your bibliography.

Final paper (40%): Refine literature review, questions, analysis, and discussion for final research article based on project. Paper will be 15 to 20 pages (double-spaced, 1-inch margins, including references), have the usual sections and follow the norms of a research presentation in the field, suitable for submission to ICA or related conference. This may be collaborative with approval by the instructor.

To be satisfactory, you must show evidence of having connected your chosen issue or study to some of the conceptual areas covered in class and having examined recent work in your area by citing recent articles (2008 to present) in scholarly journals (J&MCQ, Critical Studies in Mass Communication, Political Communication, International Journal of Press/Politics, Media Culture & Society, Journal of Communication, Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, Public Opinion Quarterly, Communication Research, etc.).

See instructor’s “Research paper organization guide” for elements to include: https://www.academia.edu/1746961/Research_paper_organization_guide
The Successful Academic: People who get things done and accomplish their goals often share these traits:

- **Resilience:** The ability to recover from setbacks and cope effectively with stress
- **Grit:** Perseverance and passion for challenging long-term goals
- **Conscientiousness:** A tendency to be orderly, self-controlled, industrious, responsible, and willing to delay gratification
- **Creativity:** The willingness to break with convention, challenge the status quo, and come up with new ideas
- **Focus:** The ability to zero in on one thing at a time, tune out distractions, and avoid multitasking
- **Self regulation:** An awareness of what matters and the discipline to avoid temptations and see a task through


University of Texas Honor Code: The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Students with disabilities: The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone).

Religious Holy Days: By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Emergency Evacuation Policy: Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation,
follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

**Behavior Concerns Advice Line:** BCAL: 232-5050

**Resources for Learning & Life at UT Austin:** The University of Texas has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning. You are particularly encouraged to use the Learning Skills Center on campus for help on writing assignments. Also, the PCL reference librarians can assist you with online news retrieval and other information finding tasks.

The UT Learning Center: [http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/](http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/)
Undergraduate Writing Center: [http://uwc.utexas.edu/](http://uwc.utexas.edu/)
Oral presentation: [http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/sig/proposal/requirements/communication](http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/sig/proposal/requirements/communication)
Writing: [http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/sig/faculty/writing](http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/sig/faculty/writing)
[http://www46.homepage.villanova.edu/john.immerwahr/UTAustin.htm](http://www46.homepage.villanova.edu/john.immerwahr/UTAustin.htm)
Counseling & Mental Health Center: [http://cmhc.utexas.edu/](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/)
Career Exploration Center: [http://www.utexas.edu/student/careercenter/](http://www.utexas.edu/student/careercenter/)
Student Emergency Services: [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/)
Safety issues: [http://www.utexas.edu/safety/terms/](http://www.utexas.edu/safety/terms/)