UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Sociology of Culture and Communication (blended)

2425-2-F0101R021

Course title

Sociology of Culture and Communication (*blended learning*)

Topics and course structure

The class addresses the nexus between cultural forms and communication processes, which produce, convey and transform the categories used by the people to make sense of social reality. The power dimension will be systematically considered in order to address its relevance in mass communication, also in the social media era.

The lessons will use a multidisciplinary and multi-level approach, which deals with the big picture, daily routines performed by strategic actors, and linguistic practices, shifting from historical accounts to sociological enquiry and finally to cultural and discourse analysis.

Objectives

Knowledge and Understanding: Students will acquire in-depth knowledge about the information system in the old and new media, its functions in the wider social system, the production routines that characterise it and their effects. In particular, emphasis will be placed on media representations and their ideological character, language - understood as a resource for the production and reproduction of reality - and the role of the media and social media in the broader public construction of social problems.

Ability to relate knowledge and models: knowledge will be acquired through a continuous dialogue between theoretical concepts, analytical tools, empirical materials and examples presented by the lecturer.

Ability to apply knowledge and models: conceptual models and analytical categories useful for investigating the social construction of reality, once introduced, will be used by the students themselves who will discuss scholarship provided by the lecturer and critically examine varied journalistic texts of their choosing.

Methodologies

The course is held in blended-learning mode.

Frontal lectures will be used for the presentation and contextualization of the main topics and for the introduction of analytical and theoretical concepts.

Students' assignments will be presented in class, with web conferences, essays, multimedia presentations, and forums. The assignments have the purpose of promoting learning-by-doing and of developing skills in oral presentation with audio-video support, in group discussion, in academic writing.

Online and offline teaching materials

Lessons are in Italian. Teaching materials for students attending the lessons will be uploaded as soon as they will be needed on the e-learning platform.

Programme and references

The course is divided into 4 parts, each consisting of lectures in person and online activities:

1) **The idea of “news” and its textual forms. The ritual and techniques of objectivity. The epistemologies of journalism.**

Lectures in person (6 hours)

- Introduction to the course and to the birth of the idea of "news"
- The ritual of objectivity vs. standpoint epistemology.

Online activity (6 hours):

Reading of the lectures and presentation in Powerpoint or similar software with a 15-20 minutes talk

2) The social organization of news production. Sources, PR, news management, informal relations
Lectures in person (6 hours):

- News-making, sources, PR, "primary definers" and consensus ideology
- News as a promotion of events. News as organizational accounts
- Reported speech. Embedding of voices. News-values and filters in the social construction of reality.

Online activity (9 hours):
Online lecture. Reading of the lectures, upload of a text with the analysis of two news stories, participation to a forum online to discuss the work with the other students.

3) The convergence between traditional and new media

Lectures in person (9 hours):

- Changes in the information environment in the age of new media
- Journalism and new media: transformations and problems
- Participation and debates on social media

Online activity (7 hours):
Online lecture. Examination - with a focus on hybridisation and re-mediation - of certain news, streams, cross-media content (in the broadest sense, including videos, memes, galleries, etc.), using the analytical categories presented in the course and expanded on the bibliography provided. Preparation of a multimedia presentation to be uploaded to the forum online for the discussion the work with the other students.

4) The construction of social problems and *media-hypes*.

Lectures in person (10 hours):

- A constructionist framework for the study of social problems
- Media-hypes and moral panics
- Media-hypes and moral panics in the age of social media

Online activity (3 hours):
Study of assigned readings. Writing an in-depth essay on moral panic or media hype through a literature search or identification of a case of moral panic and its analysis and presentation in class, with discussion.

Bibliography
Those following the blended-learning teaching path will work on the materials provided from time to time. Alternatively, the bibliography consists of the handouts, which will be uploaded to the e-learning page at the beginning of the course, and a text of your choice from the two listed:

· Nagel, A. Contro la vostra realtà. Come l'estremismo del web è diventato mainstream, Luiss University Press, 2018, 172 pp.
· Lolli, A. La guerra dei meme. Fenomenologia di uno scherzo infinito, effequ, 2021, 208 pp.
· Acerbi, A. Tecnopanico. Media digitali tra ragionevoli cautele e paure ingiustificate, il Mulino, 2025, 180 pp.

Assessment methods

Test type
Students will be assessed in progress on their analyses of journalistic products and information streams, discussions of bibliographic materials, essay writing and oral presentations, and the quality and assiduity of their participation. Those who do not follow the blended learning track will instead take an oral interview in which their preparation on all the texts provided will be tested.

Evaluation criteria
Students' presentations, written or oral, will be assessed on the basis of their ability to relate concepts and empirical material, use concepts accurately, find relevant literature and cite it correctly, present arguments in a clear, balanced and organised manner. Those who did not attend the course will be assessed on their mastery of the topics in the syllabus, their ability to make connections between the various concepts and topics, and the precision and clarity of the language used to explain the topics.

Office hours

See the class web page.

Programme validity

The course programme is valid for two years.

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS