UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Digital Media and Consumption

2526-3-E1601N095

Learning objectives

The course aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the social organization of production and consumption processes that characterize media organizations, with particular attention to those linked to digital cultures. Through a cultural analysis of the organizational, economic, and communicative dynamics of these new forms of production and consumption, the course is designed to prepare students for master's programs or professional opportunities in this field.

1. Knowledge and understanding: theoretical understanding of the main paradigms related to media production and consumption.
2. Applied knowledge and understanding: ability to apply conceptual tools to the empirical analysis of media-related cases.
3. Independent judgment: development of critical thinking skills regarding digital cultural phenomena.
4. Communication skills: ability to present individual and group research effectively.
5. Learning skills: acquisition of tools to learn independently from multidisciplinary sources.

Contents

The course is divided into four parts:

1. Foundations of the cultural approach to media
2. Cultural industry, digital media, and creative production
3. Platform studies, artificial intelligence, and cultural production
4. Seminar-based project work

Detailed program

The course is divided into three parts.

The ***first part*** will provide the basic tools for analyzing *from a cultural perspective* the forms of production and consumption characteristic of old- and new-generation media organizations. Through a short series of introductory theoretical lectures, the basics of the *sociology of cultural production approach* to the analysis of media organizations and the resulting processes of cultural production and consumption will be presented. Predominantly through the reconstruction of a basic glossary, the more general issues related to the cultural analysis of the worlds of communication and media cultures in general will be addressed.

The ***second part*** will focus on the emergence and organizational characteristics of the so-called *cultural industries* and their gradual transformation into *creative industries*, up to the entry of new digital media and new forms of content production. In this part, the main approaches to the *cultural study of media organizations* - from neo-institutionalism to the sociology of cultural production - with a focus on an in-depth examination of three areas of interest: an examination of the *production processes* internal to these types of media organizations; an examination of the *cultural products* that emerge from this particular type of content production; and an examination of the *consumption practices* that emerge in response to these new types of cultural offerings. Concluding this part, some aspects in particular of the new digital cultures will be explored, examining the effects of the processes of *platformization*, the emergence of new *subcultures* within the new digital environments, and, finally, the particular role of *cultural intermediaries* that moderators of digital platforms have gradually acquired.

In the ***third part***, a number of empirical case studies will be investigated through in-depth thematic seminar discussions that will include *group project work* to be carried out in the classroom. In this last part, it will be possible to agree with the lecturer on a group work dedicated to examining a particular case study related to moments in the production or consumption of media content, and specific contemporary cases will be discussed in each of the cases in the classroom through a seminar format to put the conceptual vocabulary and analytical approaches developed in the first two parts of the course to the test of empirical analysis.

Prerequisites

Basic knowledge of major theories and issues in general sociology.

Teaching methods

In-class lectures; seminar activities; critical discussion of texts and audiovisual materials. Total of 56 hours:

- 60% lecture-based teaching;
- 40% interactive teaching;
- Up to 30% of the total hours may be delivered remotely (synchronously or asynchronously), subject to coordination with the schedule coordinator.

Assessment methods

Three alternative teaching and assessment tracks:

Track A – Active (attending students with presentation and final paper)
Writing a monographic essay on a cultural product, agreed upon with the teacher by mid-course.
Participation in group seminar presentations in class.
Production and discussion of an individual final paper (8–10 pages).
Assessment: Group presentation (30%), monographic essay (20%), final paper (50%).

Track B – Observational (attending students with written exam)
Attendance of lectures and study of texts discussed in class.
Assessment: Final written exam (100%).

Track C – Non-attending students
Independent study of the texts indicated as “material not discussed in class.”
Assessment: Final written exam (100%).

Assessed competences:
Theoretical understanding and analytical skills (all tracks);
Application skills and independent judgment (presentation and final paper);
Communication skills (presentation);
Learning skills (all tracks).

Grading criteria: assessed on a 30-point scale, based on theoretical quality, conceptual rigor, and clarity of expression.
Alignment with objectives: each track is designed to develop and assess the five competences listed above.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Texts discussed during classrooms
1. Balbi, G., & Magaudda, P. (2021). *Media digitali: La storia, i contesti sociali, le narrazioni.* Laterza.
2. Stark, D., & Pais, I. (2021). *Management algoritmico nell’economia delle piattaforme.* Economia & lavoro, 56(3), 57-80.
3. Celis Bueno, C., Chow, P. S., & Popowicz, A. (2025). *Not “what”, but “where is creativity?”: towards a relational-materialist approach to generative AI*. AI & SOCIETY, 40(2), 339-351.

Texts not discussed during classrooms
1. Hesmondhalgh, D. (2015). *Le industrie culturali*. Egea. **SECONDA EDIZIONE!! (non va bene la prima edizione)**
2. Poell, T.; Nieborg, D. B. & Duffy, B. E. (2022). *Piattaforme digitali e produzione culturale*. Minimum fax Edizioni.
3. Mazzini, F. (2023). Hackers. Storia e pratiche di una cultura. Laterza, Bari-Roma.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE | RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION