Politics in media

PROF. GIOVANNA MASCHERONI

Course aims and intended learning outcomes

The purpose of this course is to provide an understanding of the role of the media in contemporary democracies. Accordingly, the course examines the links between the media, power and politics in theory and practice, from a comparative perspective. Moreover, it aims to offer a critical review of key aspects of contemporary theory and research in political communications, media and audience studies, internet studies.

Intended Learning Outcomes (knowledge and understanding)
As a result of the course the students will be able to understand the main theories, and evaluate the strengths and the weaknesses of the various approaches that aim to explain the compex relationship between the media system and the political system.

Intended Learning Outcomes (applying knowledge and understanding)
Students will also manage to apply their knowledge to the critical evluation of key contemporary issues such as 'fake news' and disinformation campaigns on social media, data-driven campaigns, the mediated performance of populism, celebrity politics, digital citizenship, the consequences of datafication for citizenship rights.

Course content

The course examines a range of issues related to media and politics, including:
– the media and theories of democratic engagement;
– the mediatization of politics (and society);
– the hybrid media system and the political news cycle;
– media representations, agenda setting and the formation of public opinion;
– networked publics as affected publics;
– celebrity politics and the popularisation of politics.
– socially mediated publicness and networked affective publics;
– the logic of collective vs. connective action;
– the role of social media and automation in election campaigns (computational propaganda);
– 'fake news';
– digital citizenship;
– the consequences of datafication for citizenship rights.

Reading list

Lecture notes and class notes (the slides will be made available on Blackboard).

Reading list (also available on Blackboard):

Mazzoleni, G., & Schulz, W. (1999). "Mediatization" of politics: A challenge for democracy?. Political communication, 16(3), 247-261.

Street, J. (2004). Celebrity politicians: popular culture and political representation. The British journal of politics and international relations, 6(4), 435-452.

Van Zoonen, L. (2006). The personal, the political and the popular: A woman's guide to celebrity politics. European journal of cultural studies, 9(3), 287-301.

Bennett, W.L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics. Information, communication & society, 15(5), 739-768.

Howard, P.N., Woolley, S., & Calo, R. (2018). Algorithms, bots, and political communication in the US 2016 election: The challenge of automated political communication for election law and administration. Journal of information technology & politics, 15(2), 81-93.

Gunther, R., Beck, P.A., & Nisbet, E.C. (2019). "Fake news" and the defection of 2012 Obama voters in the 2016 presidential election. Electoral Studies.

Farkas, J., & Schou, J. (2018). Fake news as a floating signifier: hegemony, antagonism and the politics of falsehood. Javnost-The Public, 25(3), 298-314.

Van Dijck, J. (2014). Datafication, dataism and dataveillance: Big Data between scientific paradigm and ideology. Surveillance & Society, 12(2), 197-208.

Hintz, A., Dencik, L., & Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2017). Digital Citizenship and Surveillance| Digital Citizenship and Surveillance Society—Introduction. International Journal of Communication, 11, 9.

Lyon, D. (2017). Digital citizenship and surveillance| surveillance culture: Engagement, exposure, and ethics in digital modernity. International Journal of Communication, 11, 9.

Teaching method

The course is based on lectures, and students-led seminars (group presentations).

Assessment method and criteria

Attending students' peformance will be assessed through a group assignment (30%) and final written exam (70%). More specifically, students will be asked to critically read, analyise and present in small groups (3-4 persons per group) one scientific article chosen among a list of articles provided at the beginning of the course, and on the basis of a list of questions that will guide the analysis. The assessment criteria include the ability to address all the guiding questions; the ability to make links to other theories and works in media and politics as well as in other courses; the ability to identify critical issues; soundness and clarity of the argumentation. The final exam will include a list of ten open ended questions on the topics of the lectures and the reading list, among which the students will select 5 questions. Each question will be given a score from 0 (missing answer) to 6 (excellent answer). The assessment is based on the number of answers, the ability to use the correct terminology, the reference to the appropriate concepts and theories, the identification of critical issues, the clarity and soundness of the argumentation.

Non attending students will give a final exam including 10 open-ended questions based on the reading list. Each question will be given will be given a score from 0 (=D, uncorrect or missing answer) to 3 (=A, excellent answer). The assessment is based on the number of answers, the ability to use the correct terminology, the reference to the appropriate concepts and theories, the identification of critical issues, the clarity and soundness of the argumentation.

Notes and prerequisites

The course introduces the students to the study of the role of media in contemporary politics. In so doing, it will draw especially on the concepts and theories discussed in the Sociology course. Students are therefore encouraged to review the topics and language of Sociology.

Place and time of consultation hours
Prof. Giovanna Mascheroni: Monday, 16.30 – 18.00, Department of Communication, via Sant'Agnese 2, 4th floor.