Overview

Course Organiser:

- Dr Ella McPherson, em310@cam.ac.uk

Lecturers:

- Dr Rikke Amundsen, rba26@cam.ac.uk
- Prof Jennifer Gabrys, jg899@cam.ac.uk
- Dr Ella McPherson, em310@cam.ac.uk
- Dr Tiffany Page, tp422@cam.ac.uk
- Dr Jorge Saavedra Utman, jsu21@cam.ac.uk

Aims and objectives of the paper:

- To equip students with the analytical skills and the theoretical and empirical knowledge to understand, navigate and change the rapidly-evolving dynamics between media, culture and societies;
- To critically examine approaches that put culture at the centre in our understanding of societies;
- To develop reflexivity around the intersection of power with media and technology as relates to political communication and everyday life;
- To deepen understanding through developing skills in the use of theory to analyse empirical cases and the use of these empirical cases to advance theory;
- To build argumentation skills through supervision presentations, essay writing and group discussions in lectures or supervisions.

Course content:

This paper is concerned with the social analysis of culture, media, symbolic forms and information and communication technologies. This is manifested in a theoretical focus on approaches to the study of media and culture, including their relationships with capitalism and with democracy and other norms; aspects such as cultural production, the effects of mediums on societies, representation, and audiences; and cultural studies. Lectures examine key concepts, theories and debates in these areas, as well as in the empirical areas of political communication and digital media and everyday life. In all cases, lecture content may vary between years as the paper is research-led and benefits from the range of expertise among its lecturers. This is an advanced paper which builds on foundations in the study of media, culture, and information and communication technologies given in Parts I and IIA.

Changes from last year:

This course has gone through a restructuring between 2018-19 and 2019-20, though much of the content remains the same. The number of topics, and thus supervision questions and potential exam questions, has been reduced from 30 to 15 by combining two related topics into one and then asking supervision questions and exam questions that are broader and can be answered by any of the material in that topic. This is following student and supervisor feedback that this would be preferred in order to simplify supervision arrangements as well as exam preparation and to allow students to focus more on their independent argumentation. This is also in line with the direction across papers in the Department. Furthermore, the orienting principle of the topics has moved away from theorists and towards concepts. Some new topics were introduced in the Political Communication as well as the Digital Media and Everyday Life series to reflect the research expertise of the teaching team. A mock exam will be provided at the end of Michaelmas to support students in their preparation for the exam. To reflect the Department’s pedagogical concern with the climate emergency,
literature and ‘thinking and talking’ questions have been added in places to connect topics to the climate emergency.

Structure of the paper:

- **Theories of Culture and the Media**
  - One introductory lecture in Michaelmas, week 1, Tuesday 2-3:30pm (15th Oct)
  - Seven two-hour theory lectures in Michaelmas, weeks 2-8, Tuesdays 2-4pm (22nd Oct +)
  - Lecturers: Dr McPherson and Dr Page
  - 17 Mill Lane, room B, 1st floor

- **Digital Media and Everyday Life**
  - Four topics, each made up of two one-hour lectures on sub-topics
  - Eight one-hour lectures in Lent, weeks 1-8, Thursdays 2-3pm (16th Jan +)
  - Lecturers: Dr Amundsen, Dr McPherson and Dr Page
  - 17 Mill Lane, room B, 1st floor

- **Political Communication**
  - Four topics, each made up of two one-hour lectures on sub-topics
  - Eight one-hour lectures in Lent, weeks 1-8, Tuesdays 4-5pm (21st Jan +)
  - Lecturer: Prof Gabrys, Dr McPherson and Dr Saavedra Utman
  - 17 Mill Lane, room B, 1st floor

- **Revision lecture**
  - 1 one-hour Q&A session in Easter, week 1, Tuesday 2-3pm (28th Apr)
  - Lecturer: Dr McPherson
  - 17 Mill Lane, room B, 1st floor

Mode of teaching and supervision arrangements:

- Lectures are central to this paper; students are strongly advised to attend all of them. The two hours of lecture per topic allow us to use illustrative materials and to engage in classroom activities.

- The paper requires at least six supervisions held regularly over Michaelmas and Lent terms, of which at least four require students to submit essays. These should be sent by email to supervisors at least 24 hours in advance of the supervision. Students should answer the relevant supervision question in the paper guide and will receive written feedback on these essays from their supervisors. The remainder two supervisions can involve alternative preparation subject to agreement between supervisor and student; this may include a presentation on an empirical case, an analysis of a media artefact, or a 500-word blog piece for the Department website. Students taking this option are particularly encouraged to make connections between the topic in question and the climate emergency.

- The reading lists for each topic are a starting point for students and supervisors. Starred readings are the core literature, but students are encouraged to explore beyond these lists as they form their views on these topics. Students are not expected to cover all of the topics, but rather to make a balanced selection in consultation with their supervisors.

- A revision Q&A session and revision supervisions will occur in the first few weeks of Easter term. For the revision supervision, students should submit one mock exam essay done under exam conditions (closed-book, timed and handwritten/typed) at least 24 hours in advance and will receive written feedback.

- Supervision is organised centrally by Dr McPherson using a Google sheet that will be shared in the introductory lecture.

Mode of assessment:

- The paper will be assessed by a three-hour unseen examination. Students will choose three questions from an undivided exam paper.
Series 1: Theories of Culture and the Media

Aims of this series:

- To provide students with an introduction to some of the key theoretical approaches to the study of culture and the media;
- To give students a sense of the value and the fruitfulness of these approaches, while at the same time alerting them to their shortcomings;
- To introduce students to some of the key debates in the field.

1. Introduction to the study of media and culture (McPherson, 15th October)


   **Thinking and talking question:** Why has the study of the media so often overlooked connections to the climate crisis, and to what effect?

2. Capitalism, media and culture (McPherson, 22nd October)

   - *D. Freedman, The Contradictions of Media Power* (Bloomsbury, 2013) [Chapters 1 and 2]
   - *M. Horkheimer & T. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Verso, 1979) [‘The Culture Industry’]
   - J. Lewis and T. Boyce, ‘Climate Change and the Media: The Scale of the Challenge,’ in *Climate Change and the Media* (Peter Lang, 2009)
• A. C. Mendes, *Salman Rushdie in the Cultural Marketplace* (Routledge, 2016) [Chapter 4: Music and the Brown Culture Industry]


• A. Saha, “‘Curry Tales’: The production of ‘race’ and ethnicity in the cultural industries’, *Ethnicities*, 13/6 (2013), 818–837.

• H. Steinert, *Culture Industry* (Polity, 2002)


**Supervision question:** How can we understand the relationship between capitalism and media and/or culture?

**Thinking and talking question:** How does the political economy of the media shape coverage of the climate crisis?

### 3. Democracy, media and culture (and other norms) (McPherson, 29th October)


• C. Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (MIT, 1992) [Chapters 5, 12, 17 and 18]

• N. Couldry, M. Madianou, and A. Pinchevski [eds], *Ethics of Media* (Palgrave Macmillan 2013) [chapters 2 and 3]


• N Fraser, ’Publicity, Subjection, Critique,’ in *Transnationalizing the Public Sphere*. Oxford (Polity Press, 2014).

• *J. Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Polity, 1989) [Introduction]

• J. Habermas, ’Political Communication in Media Society: Does Democracy still have an Epistemic Dimension?’ in J. Habermas (ed.), *Europe: The Faltering Project* (Polity, 2009)


• Z. Papacharissi, ’The Virtual Sphere 2.0: The Internet, the Public Sphere, and Beyond,’ in *Handbook of Internet Politics* (Routledge, 2008)

• J. Saavedra Utman. *Media Commons and Social Movements, Grassroots Mediations Against Neoliberal Politics* (Routledge, 2019) [Chapter 2]

• *J. Thompson, The Media and Modernity* (Polity, 1995) [Chapter 2]

**Supervision question:** Is the public sphere a useful normative framework for analysing and/or designing media systems?

**Thinking and talking questions:** Why has safeguarding the planet not been a core norm of Western societies? Is this changing? If so, why, and to what effect?
4. Cultural production (McPherson, 5th November)

- R. Benson and E. Neveu (eds.), *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* (Polity, 2005) [Chapters 1 and 11]
- P. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Polity, 1992) [Chs. 1-3]
- S. Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World* (Granta, 2008)

*Supervision question:* What role does power play in cultural production?

*Thinking and talking question:* Why do studies of the production of culture often overlook materiality, and what consequences does this have?

5. Mediums, societies and modernities (McPherson, 12th November)

- B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (Verso, 2006) [Introduction]
- H. Innis, *Empire and Communications* (OUP, 1950) [Esp. Introduction]
- M. McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (Routledge, 1964) [Chapter 1: ‘The Medium is the Message’]
- V. Mosco, *To the Cloud: Big Data in a Turbulent World* (Routledge, 2014) [Chapter 3: ‘Selling the Cloud Sublime’]
- W. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (Methuen, 1982) [Chapter 4: ‘Writing Restructures Consciousness’]
• J. Thompson, *Political Scandal: Power and Visibility in the Media Age* (Polity, 2000)
• *S. Wyatt, ‘Technological Determinism Is Dead; Long Live Technological Determinism,’ in The Handbook of Science and Technology Studies (MIT Press, 2008)

**Supervision question:** Is medium theory technologically deterministic, and does this matter?

**Thinking and talking question:** How are the dominant mediums of today connected to the climate crisis?

6. Cultural studies and subcultures (McPherson, 19th November)

• A. Bennett, *Subcultures or Neo-Tribes? Rethinking the Relationship between Youth, Style and Musical Taste*, Sociology 33/3 (1999): pp. 599–617
• S. Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (Blackwell, 1980) [Introduction]
• S. Hall and T. Jefferson (eds), *Resistance through Rituals* (Hutchinson, 1976) [Chapters 1, 4 and 5]
• D. Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (Methuen, 1979)
• A. McRobbie, *Feminism and Youth Culture* (Palgrave, 1991) [‘Settling Accounts with Subculture: A Feminist Critique’]

**Supervision question:** Are youth subcultures forms of resistance to mainstream culture?

**Thinking and talking question:** If we put culture at the centre, how does this help us think about the climate crisis?

7. Media Texts: Representation and the Construction of Meaning (Page, 26th November)

• M. Durham and D. Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies Works* (Revised Edition) (Blackwell Publishing, 2001) [In particular chapters 13 and 24 to 27]
• *S. Hall, ‘The Work of Representation’, in S. Hall (ed), Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices (SAGE, 1997) [in particular this chapter but there are useful articles in the entire book]
• D. Inglis and J. Hughson, Confronting Culture: Sociological Vistas (Polity, 2003) [Chapter 5]
• D. Laughey, Key themes in Media Theory (Open University Press, 2007) [Chapter 4]
• D. Olusoga, Black and British: A Forgotten History (Pan Books, 2016)
• D. Strinati, An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture (Routledge, 1995), pp. 77-109
• J. Watson, Media Communication: An Introduction to Theory and Process (Palgrave, 2003) [Ch. 2]
• J. Webb, Understanding Representation (Sage, 2009)

Supervision question: Does representation matter?

8. Audiences (McPherson, 3rd December)

• C. Butler and N. Pidgeon, ‘Media Communications and Public Understanding of Climate Change: Reporting Scientific Consensus on Anthropogenic Warming,’ in Climate Change and the Media (Peter Lang, 2009)
• *R. Butsch ‘Agency, Social Interaction, and Audience Studies,’ in Media Sociology: A Reappraisal (Polity, 2014)
• *S. Hall, ‘Encoding/Decoding’ in Culture, Media, Language (Hutchinson, 1980)
• D. Laughey, Key Themes in Media Theory (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2007) [Chapter 2]
• D. Smythe, ‘On the Audience Commodity and Its Work,’ in Media and Cultural Studies: Keyworks (Blackwell Publishers, 2001)

Supervision question: Does the active audience approach advance our understanding of media reception?
Series 2: Digital Media and Everyday Life

Aims of this series:

- To further students’ understanding of the ways in which digital media affect different aspects of people’s everyday lives, from the conduct of interpersonal relationships to surveillance by states and corporations;
- To support students in their abilities to describe, compare and evaluate some of the main concepts and theories that have been used to study digital media and everyday life;
- To help students use relevant theories of culture and the media to assess how digital media can be empowering as well as disempowering for people in their everyday lives;
- To encourage students to critically assess the opportunities and threats that arise from digital media for people’s everyday lives.

1. Data, inequality and everyday life

a. New inequalities (McPherson, 16th January)

- M. Castells, Communication Power (Oxford University Press, 2013) [Chapter 2: ‘Communication in the Digital Age’]
- J. Curran, N. Fenton, and D. Freedman, Misunderstanding the Internet, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2016) [Chapters 1: ‘The Internet of Dreams’ and 3: ‘The Internet of Capital’]
- N. Srinicek, Platform Capitalism (Polity, 2016)

b. Labour and leisure (McPherson, 23rd January)


• *S. Turkle, Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (Basic Books, 2011) [chs. 9 and 10]


**Supervision question:** Who benefits from the expansion of technologies in everyday life?

**Thinking and talking question:** How have new technologies created new connections between everyday life and the climate crisis?

2. Relationships in the digital age

*a. Mediated intimacy* (Amundsen, 30th January)


• *F. Attwood, J. Hakim and A. Winch, Mediated Intimacies: Bodies, Technologies and Relationships,* *Journal of Gender Studies*, 26/3 (2017), pp. 249-253


• S. Paasonen, ‘infrastructures of intimacy,’ in *Mediated Intimacies: Connectivities, Relationalities and Proximities* (Routledge, 2018)


b. Pornography and sexualisation (Amundsen, 6th February)

- B. McNair, Striptease Culture: Sex, Media and the Democratization of Desire (Routledge, 2002)

**Supervision question:** Do you agree that the increasing influence of media and digital technology on interpersonal relationships is not necessarily a good thing?

3. Visibility and invisibility

a. Surveillance and privacy (McPherson, 13th February)

- D. Miller, Social Media in an English Village: Or How to Keep People at Just the Right Distance (UCL Press, 2016)
- C. Nippert-Eng, Islands of Privacy (Chicago, 2010). [Chapters 1, 3 and 5]

b. #MeToo and social media activist politics (Page, 20th February)

• *T. Highfield, Social Media and Everyday Politics (Polity, 2016) [‘Introduction: Everyday Politics and Social Media’ and Chapter 1: ‘Personal/Political’]
• G. Meikle, ‘Social Media, Visibility, and Activism: The Kony 2012 Campaign’, In M. Ratto and M. Boler (eds), DIY Citizenship: Critical Making and Social Media (MIT Press, 2014)
• U. A. Mejias, Off the Network: Disrupting the Digital World (University of Minnesota Press, 2013) [Chapter 9: ‘The Outside of Networks as a Method for Acting in the World’]
• D. Murthy, Twitter: Social Communication in the Twitter Age (Polity Press, 2012) [Chapter 6: ‘Twitter and Activism’]
• K. van Es, D. van Geenen and T. Boeschoten, ‘Mediating the Black Pete Discussion on Facebook: Slacktivism, Flaming Wars, and Deliberation’, First Monday 19/12 (2014).

Supervision question: Who benefits from the new politics of visibility in the digital age?

4. Digital monitoring

a. Smart environments (Gabrys, 27th February)

• I. Bogost, ‘Home Monitoring Will Soon Monitor You,’ The Atlantic (2016)
• *J. Gabrys, Program Earth: Environmental Sensing Technology and the Making of a Computational Planet (University of Minnesota Press, 2016) [especially Introduction and Chapters 8 and 9]
- S. Marvin, C. McFarlane and A. Luque-Ayala, eds., *Smart Urbanism: Utopian Vision or False Dawn?* (Routledge, 2016) [especially Introduction, and Chapter 4]

b. The quantified self (McPherson, 5th March)
  [Introduction, Conclusion, Chapter 3]

Supervision question: *Measuring is knowing*: What are the limitations of this saying in relation to monitoring in the digital age?
Series 3: Political Communication

Aims of this series:

- To introduce students to some of the key concepts, theories, and debates about political communication;
- To encourage students to argue with and apply these concepts, theories, and debates;
- To inspire students to think critically about media, technologies, democracy and power.

1. Political Communication and Political Institutions

a. Journalism and the state (McPherson, 21st January)

- *J. Dean, Democracy and other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics* (Duke University Press, 2009) [Chapter 1]
- D. Hallin, ‘Media, Political Power, and Democratization in Mexico’ in *De-Westernizing Media Studies* (Routledge, 2000)
- M. Márquez-Ramírez and M. A. Guerrero, ‘Clientelism and Media capture in Latin America,’ in *In the Service of Power: Media Capture and the Threat to Democracy* (CIMA, 2017)
- Y. Wu, ‘The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Framing of China in News Media Coverage of Global Climate Change,’ in *Climate Change and the Media* (Peter Lang, 2009)

b. The mediatization of politics (McPherson, 28th January)

• P. Howard, *New Media Campaigns and the Managed Citizen* (Cambridge University Press, 2005)

*Supervision question:* Is politics gradually becoming more dependent on the media?

2. Media and activism

*a. Participation, voice, performance and representation* (Saavedra Utman, 4th February)
• B. Cammaerts, ‘Activism and Media’, in *Reclaim the Media* (Intellect, 2007)
• J.W. Delicath and K.M. Deluca, ‘Image Events, the Public Sphere, and Argumentative Practice: The Case of Radical Environmental Groups,’ *Argumentation* 17 (2003), pp. 315–333
• E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (Verso, 2014) [chapters 1 and 4]
• A. Mattoni, ‘Repertoires of Communication in Social Movement Processes’ in *Mediation and Protest Movements* (Intellect, 2013)
• *J. Saavedra Utman, The Media Commons and Social Movements: Grassroots Mediations Against Neoliberal Politics*, New York (Routledge, 2019) [Chapters 1 to 5]
• B. Van Gorp, ‘Culture and Protests in Media Frames,’ in *Media and Revolt: Strategies and Performances from the 1960s to the Present* (Berghahn, 2014)

*b. Internet, social media and the meaning of mobilization* (Saavedra Utman, 11th February)
• L. Bennett and A. Segerberg, *The Logic of Connective Action* (Cambridge University Press, 2013)
• M. Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet* Age (Polity, 2012)
• *N. Fenton, Digital, Radical, Political* (Polity, 2016) [chapters 2 and 3]
• N. Gustafsson and N. Weinryb, ‘The Populist Allure of Social Media Activism: Individualized Charismatic Authority,’ *Organization* (2019)
• A. Hintz, ‘Social Media Censorship, Privatised Regulation and New Restrictions to Protest and Dissent,’ in Critical Perspectives on Social Media Protest: Between Control and Emancipation (Rowman and Littlefield, 2015)
• N. Santos, ‘The Brazilian Protest Wave and Digital Media: Issues and Consequences of the “Jornadas de Junho” and Dilma Rousseff’s Impeachment Process,’ In Networks, Movements and Technopolitics in Latin America (Palgrave, 2018)

**Supervision question:** Is online media activism democratizing?

3. Communication and justice

a. Digital citizenship(s) (Gabrys, 18th February)

• T. Shelton and T. Lodato, ‘Actually Existing Smart Citizens,’ City (2019), pp. 35-52

b. Human rights and humanitarian communication (McPherson, 25th February)

• S. Engle Merry, The Seductions of Quantification: Measuring Human Rights, Gender Violence and Sex Trafficking (The University of Chicago Press, 2016) [Introduction: ‘A World of Quantification’]
• N. Fenton, 'NGOs, New Media and the Mainstream News: News from Everywhere,’ in New Media, Old News: Journalism & Democracy in the Digital Age (SAGE Publications, 2010)
• M. Krause, The Good Project: Humanitarian Relief NGOs and the Fragmentation of Reason (University of Chicago Press, 2014) [Introduction]
• F. Vis and O. Gorunova, The Iconic Image on Social Media: A Rapid Research Response to the Death of Aylan Kurdi (Visual Social Media Lab, 2015)

Supervision question: Do information and communication technologies offer new opportunities for justice or new opportunities for domination?

4. News in the digital age

a. Digital fakery (McPherson, 3rd March)
• S. Banaji, WhatsApp Vigilantes (forthcoming 2019)
• A. Marwick and R. Lewis, ‘Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online’ (Data&amp;Society, 2017)
b. The future of journalism (McPherson, 10th March)


**Supervision question:** Is journalism in crisis?

**Thinking and talking question:** What should the study and practice of media do to address the climate crisis?