Faculty of Human, Social and Political Studies
PPS Tripos Part IIB 2017-18
SOC 7: Media, Culture and Society

Overview

- **Course Organiser**: Dr Ella McPherson, em310@cam.ac.uk
- **Lecturers**:
  - Dr Ella McPherson, em310@cam.ac.uk
  - Dr Tiffany Page tp442@cam.ac.uk
  - Professor John Thompson, jbt1000@cam.ac.uk
- **Supervision**: Organised centrally by Dr McPherson in the first lecture. Students and Directors of Studies may make their own independent arrangements, but should inform Dr McPherson before the first lecture, and at the latest by mid-October.

**Aims and objectives of the paper**:

- To provide knowledge and understanding of key theoretical debates and analytical approaches to the study of culture, media, symbolic forms, digital media and platforms in their social contexts;
- To deepen theoretical understanding by reference to a range of substantive topics and different areas of culture and media;
- To develop intellectual skills in critical analysis and interdisciplinary perspectives, including those that cross over between the social sciences and humanities;
- To develop oral and written 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 digital media and its focus will range in different years from communications media (primarily television and new media) to everyday life. Lectures examine key theories and debates in the study of culture and media through the work of writers such as Adorno, Benjamin, Bourdieu, Habermas and Stuart Hall. Lecture content varies each year as the paper is research-led. Topics include: cultural production, text, and reception; ethnographies of production and reception; public sphere theory; politics and the media; political economy; analysing digital media; media and identity; public opinion; theories of everyday life; culture and power. This is an advanced paper which builds on foundations in the study of culture and media given in Parts I and IIA.

**Structure of the paper**: The paper begins with a one-hour **Introduction** by Dr McPherson in week 1 of Michaelmas Term. It then has three lecture series and a revision lecture:

- **Introduction**
  - 1 one-hour lecture in Michaelmas, week 1
  - Lecturer: Dr McPherson
- **Theories of Culture and the Media**
  - 13 two-hour lectures in Michaelmas, weeks 2-8
  - Lecturers: Professor Thompson, Dr McPherson and Dr Page
- **Digital Media and Everyday Life**
  - 8 one-hour lectures in Lent, weeks 1-8
  - Lecturer: Dr McPherson
- **Media and Politics**
  - 8 one-hour lectures in Lent, weeks 1-8
  - Lecturer: Dr McPherson
- **Revision lecture**
  - 1 two-hour lecture in Easter, week 1
  - Lecturer: Dr McPherson
**Mode of teaching and supervision arrangements:** Lectures are central to this paper; students are strongly advised to attend all of them. The two-hour lecture blocks allow us to use illustrative materials. The paper requires at least 6 supervisions, of which at least 4 essay-based, preferably held regularly over the academic year. The reading lists and essay questions below each lecture are meant to provide guidance for students and supervisors; starred readings are the core literature for each topic. Students are not expected to cover all of the topics, but to make a balanced selection in consultation with their supervisors. A revision lecture and possible revision supervision will occur in the first two weeks of Easter term.

**Mode of assessment:** The paper will be assessed by one three-hour unseen examination.

**Useful textbooks:** There are no textbooks that cover all the material in the paper. However, these books give useful introductions or overviews for major components of the paper:

- **Theories of Culture and the Media:**
  - R. Silverstone, *Why Study the Media* (Sage, 1999)

- **Digital Media and Everyday Life**
  - J. Curran, N. Fenton, and D. Freedman, *Misunderstanding the Internet*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2016)
  - C. Fuchs, *Social Media: A Critical Introduction* (Sage, 2014)
  - S. Lindgren, *Digital Media and Society* (Sage, 2017)
  - D. Lupton, *Digital Sociology* (Routledge, 2015)

- **Media and Politics:**

**Introduction**

Dr McPherson
Michaelmas 2017, Tue. 2-3pm (week 1, 10 Oct)

**Series 1: Theories of Culture and the Media**

Professor Thompson, Dr McPherson and Dr Page
Michaelmas 2017, Tue. 2-4pm (weeks 2-8, beginning 17 Oct)

**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 the shortcomings;

To encourage students to read some of the classic texts in the field of media and cultural studies, and encourage them to engage critically with these texts;

To introduce students to some of the key debates in the field.

1. The Frankfurt School and the Theory of the Culture Industry (JT)

- *M. Horkheimer & T. Adorno, 'The Culture Industry' in Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Verso, 1979)
- D. Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity* (Polity, 1989), esp. chs. 5 & 6

What, if anything, is worth sustaining in Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s critique of the culture industry?

2. Habermas and the Theory of the Public Sphere (JT)

- J. Bohman, ‘The Internet as a Public Sphere’ in P. Shane (ed.), *Democracy Online*, (Routledge, 2004)
- *C. Calhoun (ed.), Habermas and the Public Sphere* (MIT, 1992), esp. chs. 5, 12, 17, 18.
- P. Dahlgren, *Television and the Public Sphere* (Sage, 1995)
- N. Garnham, *Capitalism and Communication* (Sage, 1990)
- J. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cornell, 1988)
- *J. Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Polity, 1989)
- J. Habermas, ‘Political Communication in Media Society: Does Democracy still have an Epistemic Dimension?’ in J. Habermas (ed.), *Europe: The Faltering Project* (Polity, 2009)
- *K. Nash (ed.), Transnationalizing the Public Sphere* (Polity, 2014), esp. chs. 1, 2, 4, 7
- J. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity* (Polity, 1995), chs. 2, 4 and 8

How useful is Habermas’s notion of the public sphere for understanding the political potential of the internet?

3. The Sociology of Culture I: Bourdieu and the Theory of Fields (JT)

- *C. Calhoun et al. (eds.), Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives* (Polity, 1993)
- B. Fowler (ed.), *Reading Bourdieu on Society and Culture* (Blackwell, 2000)
Either (a) Assess the usefulness of Bourdieu’s theory of fields for analysing cultural production. Or (b) Why does Bourdieu say that the field of cultural production is ‘the economic world reversed’? Is he right?

4. The Sociology of Culture II: Becker and the Production of Culture (JT)

- D. Crane (ed.), *The Production of Culture* (Sage, 1992)
- W. Powell and P DiMaggio (eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago, 1991)
- S. Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World* (Granta, 2008)

Why does Becker reject the view that works of art are the creations of individual artists? Is he right?

5. Medium Theory (JT)

- J. Carey, *Communication as Culture* (Unwin Hyman, 1989), esp. Ch. 6
- *H. Innis, Empire and Communications* (OUP, 1950)
- H. Innis, *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto, 1951)
- *M. McLuhan, Understanding Media* (Routledge, 1964)
- W. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (Methuen, 1982)

Were Innis and McLuhan technological determinists?

6. The Media and Modernity (JT)

- *K. H. Jamieson, Eloquence in an Electronic Age* (OUP, 1988)
- *J. Meyrowitz, No Sense of Place* (OUP, 1985)
- *J. Thompson, Political Scandal* (Polity, 2000)

Evaluate the argument that mediated visibility is a double-edged sword.

7. The Political Economy of Media and Technology (EMcP)

• C. Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx* (Routledge, 2014)
• N. Garnham, *Emancipation, the Media and Modernity: Arguments about the Media and Social Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2000)
• G. Goggin, ‘Facebook’s Mobile Career’, *New Media & Society*, 16/7 (2014), pp. 1068–86.
• *J. Hardy, *Critical Political Economy of the Media* (Routledge, 2014), esp. ‘Part I: Mapping Approaches and Themes’
• E. Hermann and M. McChesney, *Global Media: The New Missionaries of Global Capitalism* (Continuum, 2001)
• E. R. Meehan and E. Riordan (eds.), *Sex and Money: Feminism and Political Economy in the Media* (University of Minnesota Press, 2002)
• O. Boyd- Barrett and C. Newbold (eds.), *Approaches to Media* (Arnold, 1995), [Section 4: ‘Political Economy’]

**Assess the strengths and limitations of a political economy approach to media power.**

8. The Economics and Structure of Cultural Industries (EMcP)

• *D. Croteau and W. Haynes, Media Society: Industries, Images and Audiences* (Sage, 2003) [Chapter 2: ‘The Economics of the Media Industry’]
• G. Doyle, *Understanding Media Economics* (Sage, 2002)
• S. Lash and J. Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space* (Sage, 1994)
• J. Wasko, *Hollywood in the Information Age: Beyond the Silver Screen* (Polity, 1994)
• J. Wasko, *Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy* (Polity, 2001)

*How do the economics of the media and cultural industries affect the content of artistic works?*

9. Cultural Studies (EMcP)


*R. Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy (Penguin, 1957) ['The Newer Mass Art Sex in Shiny Packets']

R. Hoggart, Mass Media in a Mass Society (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006)


A. McRobbie, The Uses of Cultural Studies: A Textbook (Sage, 2005)


R. Williams, Culture and Society: 1780 – 1950 (Pelican books, 1971)

R. Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford University Press, 1977) [Chapter 1: ‘Basic Concepts’]

R. Williams, Culture (Fontana Press, 1981)

*R. Williams, ‘Culture is Ordinary’ in A. Gray and J. McGuigan (eds) Studying Culture: An Introductory Reader (Arnold, 1993)

*R. Williams, Culture and Materialism (Verso, 2005) [Chapter 2]

Are Raymond Williams’ and Richard Hoggart’s analyses of working class culture a celebration or a damning report?

10. Subculture Theory (EMcP)

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 (Macmillan, 1991)


S. Thornton, Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital (Polity, 1995)

S. Thornton and K. Gelder (eds), The Subcultures Reader (Routledge, 1997)

P. Webb, Exploring the Networked Worlds of Popular Music: Milieu Cultures (Routledge, 2007) [Chapters 1 and 2]

P. Willis, Learning to Labour (Saxon House, 1977)

P. Willis, Profane Culture (Routledge, 1978)

Are youth subcultures forms of resistance to mainstream culture?

11. Media Texts: Semiotics, Myth and the Construction of Meaning (TP)


*R. Barthes, Mythologies (Vintage Books, 2000)


*F. de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics (Duckworth Press, 1983), pp. 65-69, 71-3

According to Barthes, ‘myths’ in media texts are the ideological communications of the dominant culture. Is this true today? Give examples to illustrate your answer.

12. Representations of Gender in the Media (TP)

- D. Laughey, *Key Themes in Media Theory* (Open University Press, 2007) [Chapter 6]
- D. Gauntlett, *Media, Gender and Identity: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2002) [Chapters 8 and 9]
- C. Geraghty, ‘Women and Soap Opera’ in Polity (ed.), *Polity Reader in Cultural Theory* (Polity, 1993) [Chapter 17]
- A. McRobbie, *Feminism and Youth Culture: From ‘Jackie’ to ‘Just Seventeen’* (Routledge, 1991)

Are gender identities a reflection of the dominant portrayals of femininity and masculinity in the media?

13. The Mediatization of Suffering (TP)

- J. Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (Verso, 2009) [Preface and Chapters 1 and 2]
- S. Thobani’s speech at the ‘Women’s Resistance: From Victimization to Criminalization’ conference in Ottawa on October 1 2001: [http://www.herizons.ca/node/131](http://www.herizons.ca/node/131)

Is the mediated representation of suffering always justified? Consider questions of agency in your answer.
14. Media Reception: Audiences, from Effects to Active Audience (EMcP)

- D. Laughey, Key Themes in Media Theory (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2007) [Chapter 2]
- *J. Watson, Media Communication: An Introduction to Theory and Process (Palgrave, 2003) [Chapter 3]

Does the active audience approach advance our understanding of media reception?

Series 2: Digital Media and Everyday Life

Dr McPherson
Lent 2018, Thu. 2-3pm (weeks 1-8, beginning 18 Jan)

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 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: Digital Media: New Economies, Inequality and Sociality

- 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']
- C. Fuchs, Social Media: A Critical Introduction (SAGE, 2014) [Chapter 2: ‘What is Social Media?’ and Chapter 5: 'The Power and Political Economy of Social Media']
• N. Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Polity, 2016)

*Who benefits from the digital economies?*

2: Space, Place and the Home

• S. Greengard, *The Internet of Things* (MIT, 2015) [Chapter 1: ‘The Internet Changes Everything’ and Chapter 2: ‘Mobility, Clouds, and Digital Tools Usher in a Connected World’]
• *S. Moores, Media, Place and Mobility* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) [Chapter 1: ‘The Situational Geography of Social Life’]
• *S. Pink and K. Leder Mackley, Saturated and Situated: Expanding the Meaning of Media in the Routines of Everyday Life’, Media, Culture & Society, 35/6 (2013), pp. 677-691

*In what ways do digital media define our sense of place and space?*

3: Self and Identity


• S. Livingstone, ‘Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers’ Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-Expression’, *New Media & Society*, 103 (2008), pp. 393-411

• D. Lupton, *Digital Sociology* (Routledge, 2015) [Chapter 8: ‘The Digitised Body/Self’]

• A.E. Marwick, *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age* (Yale University Press, 2013) [Chapter 3: ‘The Fabulous Lives of Micro-Celebrities’]

• *D.C. Murray, ‘Notes to Self: The Visual Culture of Selfies in the Age of Social Media’, Consumption Markets & Culture, 18/6 (2015), pp. 490-516


• J. van Dijck, ‘You have One Identity’: Performing the Self on Facebook and LinkedIn’, *Media, Culture & Society*, 35/2 (2013), pp. 199-215


What is the relevance of Goffman’s ‘The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life’ for studying online self-presentation?

4: Interpersonal Relationships and Communities

• *N.K. Baym, Personal Connections in the Digital Age* (Polity, 2010) [Chapter 4: ‘Communities and Networks’ and Chapter 5: ‘New Relationships, New Selves?’]


• M. de Bruijn, ‘Connecting in Mobile Communities: an African Case Study’, *Media, Culture & Society*, 36/3 (2014), pp. 319-335


• N. Haynes, *Social Media in Northern Chile: Posting the Extraordinary Ordinary* (UCL Press, 2016)


- T. McDonald, Social Media in Rural China: Social Networks and Moral Frameworks (UCL Press, 2016)
- *S. Turkle, Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other (Basic Books, 2011), chs. 9 and 10

Do social media make us more social? Answer with reference to either interpersonal relationships or communities.

5: Big Data and the Quantified Self

- R. Kitchin, The Data Revolution: Big Data, Open Data, Data Infrastructures and their Consequences (Sage, 2014), esp. chs. 1-6, 8, 10
- G. Neff and D. Nafus, Self-Tracking (MIT, 2016)

‘Measuring is knowing’: what are the limitations of this saying in relation to Big Data and the Quantified Self?

6: Privacy and Surveillance

Do you agree with the view that if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear? Answer in relation to discussions of privacy online.

7: Transparency

- *B-C. Han, The Transparency Society (Stanford University Press, 2015)

Do you agree that more transparency is not necessarily a good thing?
8: #Everyday Politics and Slacktivism

- H. S. Christensen, 'Political Activities on the Internet: Slacktivism or Political Participation by Other Means?' *First Monday* 16/2 (2011)
- *T. Highfield, Social media and Everyday Politics* (Polity, 2016) ['Introduction: Everyday Politics and Social Media' and Chapter 1: 'Personal/Political']
- 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']
- C. Shirky, *The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change*, *Foreign Affairs* (2011)
- 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)

Does slacktivism benefit the other or the self?

Series 3: Political Communication

Dr Ella McPherson
Lent 2018, Tuesday 4-5pm (weeks 1-8, beginning 23 January)

Aims of this series:

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

1. Media and Democracy

- *J. Dean, Democracy and other neoliberal fantasies: Communicative capitalism and left politics* (Duke University Press, 2009) [Chapter 1]

What is worse for democratic journalism, the state or the market?

2. The Mediatization of Politics

• *J. Strömberg and F. Esser, ‘Mediatization of Politics: Transforming Democracies and Reshaping Politics’ in K. Lundby (ed.), *Mediatization of Communication* (De Gruyter, 2013)

Is politics gradually becoming more dependent on the media?

3. From the ‘CNN Effect’ to the ‘Al Jazeera Effect’: Agenda-Setting and Policy-Making

• D. Graber (ed.), *Media Power in Politics* (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2010)

**Do the media influence policy-making?**

4: Public Opinion

• *W.L. Bennett and R. Entman (eds.), Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), esp. R. Entman and S. Herbst, ‘Reframing Public Opinion as We Have Known It’
• W. Gamson, *Talking Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1992)
• *J. Lewis, Constructing Public Opinion* (Columbia University Press, 2001)

‘Public opinion does not exist’ (Bourdieu). Discuss.

5: Media and Elections

• *W.L. Bennett and R. Entman (eds.), Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2001)
• *B. Franklin, Packaging Politics: Political Communications in Britain’s Media Democracy* (Arnold, 2004)
• *P. Howard, New Media Campaigns and the Managed Citizen* (Cambridge University Press, 2005)
• M. Scammell, *Designer Politics: How Elections Are Won* (Palgrave, 1995)

How has new media changed electoral campaigns?

**6: Civic Disengagement and Compassion Fatigue**

• *P. Dahlgren, Media and Political Engagement: Citizens, Communication and Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2009)
• S. Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (Routledge, 1999)
• *P. Norris, A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Postindustrial Societies* (Cambridge University Press, 2000)
What is the relationship between the media and patterns of political engagement?

7. War, Terrorism and the Media

- *S. Allan and B. Zelizer, Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime (Routledge, 2004)
- H. Giroux, Beyond the Spectacle of Terrorism: Global Uncertainty and the Challenge of the New Media (Routledge, 2006)
- Hoskins and B. O’Loughlin, War and Media: The Emergence of Diffused War (Polity, 2010)
- J. Lynch and J. Galtung, Reporting Conflict: New Directions in Peace Journalism (University of Queensland Press, 2010)
- *D. Matheson and S. Allan, Digital War Reporting (Polity, 2009)
- J. Rodgers, Reporting Conflict (Palgrave, 2012)
- D. Thussu and D. Freedman (eds.), War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7 (Sage, 2003)
- G. Wolfsfeld, Media and the Path to Peace (Cambridge University Press, 2004)

How does the practice of journalism influence how conflict is covered?

8. The Future of News

- *S. Allan, Citizen Witnessing: Revisioning Journalism in Times of Crisis (Polity, 2013)
- S. Allan and E. Thorsen (eds.), Citizen Journalism: Global Perspectives (Peter Lang, 2009)
• L. Graves, *Deciding What’s True: The Rise of Political Fact-Checking in American Journalism* (Columbia University Press, 2016)
• A. Marwick and R. Lewis, ‘Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online’ (Data&Society, 2017)

*Is journalism in crisis?*

**Revision lecture**

Dr Ella McPherson

*Easter 2018, Tuesday 2-4pm (week 1, 1 May)*