

**Proposal for:****Syllabus “Media and Politics in Europe” at Universidad Complutense de Madrid**

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**Description:**

The importance of media in today's societies is difficult to overestimate. Media, and especially mass media, are the backbone of society, as they transmit, but also create, select and store information and thus influence perceptions, knowledge and even memories. Mass media are both part of the social fabric and communication in everyday life, and they influence culture, economics, and specifically politics.

This is not a new phenomenon. Since the first publication of massively produced newspapers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, mass media has been considered fundamentally important for the shaping of modern societies: The creation of nations and nation-states, of democracies, but also of dictatorships cannot be fathomed without the role of mass media in these processes. The circulation of information and its use for propaganda purposes, the shaping, highlighting and omitting of news and certain perspectives have made media the most effective political tool ever.

Obviously, the form, technology and outreach of media has changed over the last 200 years, from newspapers to photography and the internet; from radio to television to social media. In this course, we will study the most relevant aspects of the relations between media and politics from the French Revolution to today. While this is a global phenomenon, we will concentrate in this course on the relationship between media and politics in modern Europe.

**Learning outcomes**

- 1) write fluently and persuasively,
- 2) communicate and synthesize complex ideas,
- 3) analyze critically sources related to media history,
- 4) Independently research relevant materials to broaden and deepen their knowledge of the topic,
- 5) explain the social, political, cultural and economic dimensions of different media in their historical contexts,
- 6) explain the role of media both in democratic societies and in dictatorships.

**Assessment**

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| 30% | In-class participation and class-activities (in part based on prior reading, film screenings and/or preparatory discussions in an online-forum).   |
| 15% | Presentation related to one of the main topics of the course and based on independent research by the students (depending on the size of the course, these presentations will be individual or in small groups). |
| 15% | Analysis of a European news outlet.  |
| 40% | Final essay (suitable topics will be provided by the professor).   |

**WEEKS** (the topics proposed here are subject to change)

***Part I: Introduction to the course and to the emergence of mass media and its political power***

**1. Introduction to the course**

The relationship between (mass) media and (mass) politics: The political power and perils of media; Media as a transmitter of information and as a trendsetter of topics and political opinions.

**2. The invention of mass media around 1800**

The role of newspapers in creating a public sphere in 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe; Aiming for democracy: The role of newspapers in the French Revolution

***Part II: Media, politics and propaganda in the 20<sup>th</sup> century***

**3. The uses of images in international war reporting: Information, persuasion, emotion**

Case study: The international reception of the Spanish Civil War through photography

**4. Media in dictatorships I: Creating propaganda for the masses**

Case study: Film and photography in the Soviet Union

**5. Media in dictatorships II: Omnipresence of indoctrination**

Case study: Radio and propaganda in Nazi Germany

**6. Radio as a weapon in the Cold War**

Case study: Radio Free Europe and the Cold War

**7. Photography as a weapon against occupation**

Case study: The Prague Spring of 1968 as a Media event

**8. How media changed the outcome of history I**

Case study: The fall of the Wall of Berlin as a live-coverage television event

**9. How media changed the outcome of history II**

Case study: The Spanish “23-F” (the attempted coup d’état in Spain on February 23, 1981) as a live-coverage event

**10. Media empires and the rise of populism**

Case study: The media tycoon and long-term Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi

***Part III. European Media and Politics in the times of the internet***

**11. The role of social media in democratic protest movements**

Case study: The Spanish anti-austerity movement “movimiento 15-M” of 2011 and their use of social networks

**12. Post-truth politics and fake news and the shape of the EU**

Case study: the Brexit referendum in 2016

**13. Fake news and foreign influence in European elections**

Case study: Russian influence in European elections

**14. History, Disrupted. How social media and the world wide web have changed the past**

**15. The internet and social media: Doom or boon for democratic societies?**

A final discussion

**Selected Bibliography**

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Chapman, Jane: *Comparative Media History: An Introduction, 1789 to the present*, Oxford: Polity Press, 2005.

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Davis, Richard, and David Taras (eds.): *Electoral Campaigns, Media, and the New World of Digital Politics*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022.

Dayan, Daniel, and Katz, Elihu: *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.

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Kaplan, Richard L.: "Press, Paper, and the Public Sphere.," *Media History* 21, no. 1 (2015): 42-54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2014.955841>.

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Visvizi, Anna, and Miltiadis D. Lytras (eds.): *Politics and Technology in the Post-Truth Era*, Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing, 2019.

Washbourne, Neil: *Mediating Politics: Newspapers, Radio, Television and the Internet*, Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill International, 2010.