



UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID
UNIVERSIDADES NORTEAMERICANAS REUNIDAS

SUBJECT
SUBJECT TITLE: Media and Politics in Europe
QUARTER AND ACADEMIC YEAR: second quarter, 2025-26
SCHEDULE: Wednesdays-Thursdays, 14:30-16:00
PREREQUISITES: none
COMPETENCES- OBJECTIVES (BRIEF DESCRIPTION): <p>The importance of media today 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. At the same time, (mass) media is essential for democracy, and thus considered the “fourth pillar of the state”.</p> <p>This is not a new phenomenon. Since the first publication of massively produced newspapers in the 18th 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.</p> <p>Certainly, the form, technology and outreach of media have changed over the last 200 years, from newspapers to photography to 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 here on the relationship between media and politics in modern Europe.</p>

TEACHER
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TUTORING HOURS: Wednesdays and Thursdays, 16-18h

COURSE SCHEDULE, TOPICS, LECTURES AND TASKS ASSIGNED
The course is designed to run for fifteen weeks, according to the calendar of the program of the North American Universities Reunidas at UCM.

The weekly readings/viewings as well as the presentation topics will be provided at the beginning of the course.

Part I: The emergence of mass media and its political power

Topic 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.

Topic 2: The invention of mass media around 1800

The role of newspapers in creating a public sphere in 18th century Europe; The role of newspapers in the French Revolution; Public opinion, free speech and censorship in the 1800s.

Part II: Media, politics and propaganda in the 20th century

Topic 3: The uses of images in international war reporting: Information, persuasion and emotion

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

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

Case study: Film and photography in the Soviet Union

Topic 5. Media in dictatorships II: The omnipresence of indoctrination

Case study: Radio, film and propaganda in Nazi Germany

Topic 6. Radio as a weapon in the Cold War

Case study: Radio Free Europe and the Cold War

Topic 7. Media as a tool against oppression

Case study: The Prague Spring of 1968 as a media event / Self-publishing as an act of unofficial counterculture

Topic 8. How media changed the outcome of history I

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

Topic 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)

Topic 10. Media and the rise of populism

Class discussion: What is the reason for rising populism in Europe since the 1990s? What role does mass media play in it?

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

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

Case study: The Spanish anti-austerity movement “movimiento 15-M” of 2011 / The Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine, 2013

Topic 12. Post-truth politics and fake news in European politics

Case study: The Brexit referendum in 2016

Topic 13. Fake news and foreign influence in European elections

Case study: Russian influence in recent European elections

Topic 14. The internet and social media: Doom or boon for democratic societies?

Case study: The power of TikTok and co. over public opinion

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

For each of the topics, the professor outlines the general characteristics of the historical period in question and gives an overview of the main characteristics and developments in European media history.

Based on weekly obligatory readings of secondary literature, students will participate in informed discussion activities related to the day's topic. This will be accompanied by the analysis and discussion of primary sources, mostly sources regarding media events of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Students are also expected to prepare a presentation on a specific topic related to one of the case studies. These presentations may be individual or in small groups (2-3 people) and are related to the subjects discussed each week. The presentation will be followed by a class discussion. The teacher will provide topics, literature and references in advance.

Required readings: Assigned readings for each class will be provided during the first week. This syllabus also offers a list of general references for the whole course.

Finally, the students will be required to write a 2,000-word essay based on one of the topics of the course. Detailed information will be provided at the beginning of the semester.

SUBJECT OBJECTIVES

The learning outcomes of this course are:

- 1) To write fluently and persuasively,
- 2) To communicate and synthesize complex ideas,
- 3) To analyze critically sources related to media history,
- 4) To independently research relevant materials to broaden and deepen the knowledge of the topic.

More specific learning outcomes include:

- 1) To explain the social, political, cultural and economic dimensions of different media in their historical contexts,
- 2) To explain the role of media both in democratic societies and in dictatorships.

EVALUATION AND QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

PARTIAL EXAM: | 20 | %

FINAL EXAM: | 30 | %

WRITTEN WORK OR PRESENTATIONS: | 30 | %

CLASS PARTICIPATION: | 20 | %

ATTENDANCE: It is mandatory. It is mandatory. From the second absence without justification, a point will be lowered in the Spanish grading system (for example, an 8 will drop to a 7). In the case of the Spanish Cinema class, missing one class will be equivalent to two absences.

Likewise, lateness will also be penalized, more than 15 minutes late will be equivalent to an absence. Excused absences are considered those documented by the appropriate physician or program director.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Plagiarism, the use of materials not permitted in exams and tests, copying answers from another classmate, falsification or misappropriation of information for assignments, submission of the same assignment or sections of it in more than one course, helping a student who is cheating, etc. The penalty will be left to the discretion of the subject professor and the student's Program Director, in accordance with their campus policies and procedures.

GUIDE AND INDICATIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

Students are expected to complete a short essay (2.000 words) on one of the course's topics (usually on the same topic as the presentation). Specific indications and references will be provided in class, which will help to define correctly the subject and scope of the essay.

MANDATORY BIBLIOGRAPHY AND OTHER RESOURCES

- Briggs, Asa, and Burke, Peter, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020.
- Chapman, Jane: *Comparative Media History: An Introduction, 1789 to the present*, Oxford: Polity Press, 2005.
- Couldry, Nick et al. (eds.): *Media Events in a Global Age*, New York: Routledge, 2009.
- 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.
- Engler, Mark: "The Internet: Tool of Revolution – or Repression?," *Foreign Policy in Focus* (Apr 29, 2011).
- Giusti, Serena, and Elisa Piras (eds.): *Democracy and Fake News: Information Manipulation and Post-Truth Politics*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021.
- Hodenberg, Christina von: *Media History After 1945*. München: Beck, 2012.
- 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>.
- Reichardt, Rolf: "The French Revolution as a European Media Event," in: *European History Online (EGO)*, published by the Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz 2012-08-27. URL: <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/reichardtr-2010-en>.
- Steinhauer, Jason: *History, Disrupted. How social media and the world wide web have changed the past*, Cham 2022.
- 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.