

MODULE: Sociology of the Media

Griffith College Dublin – Journalism and Visual Media

Fall Semester

***PRE-REQUISITE:* background in Media, Political Science and/or Sociology**

Introduction

The media, its institutions and practices are the major source of information and culture in or about our society today. Students must be able to not only operate within but also to examine objectively, this immensely powerful institution. The purpose of the course is to provide an understanding of the relationship of social processes to the media. In other words this course looks at society in terms of how it impacts on the media and, in turn, in terms of how the media impacts back on society. Students should view society in the media and the media in society, from a sociological perspective.

Module Aims

This module aims to enable the student to:

- Possess an advanced knowledge and practical awareness of how and why media institutions, practices and culture developed in the way that it has in western society.
- Express in a critical and evaluative manner a sociological analysis of the media industry as one social institution among many institutions in society.
- Display an understanding of media's interrelationship between with society, politics and the economy.

Module Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this module, the student should be able to:

- Demonstrate independent critical judgement and analytical skills and apply ethical standards to their work.
- Pursue further study and research in media/communications and/or related humanities based disciplines.
- Initiate and evaluate sociological research in and on the media.
- Possess an objective, critical understanding of the structures, trends and future developments of media in Ireland and internationally.
- Understand from a sociological perspective, the interrelationship of media, with government, politics and economics.
- Competently identify and apply the knowledge, concepts and perspectives relevant to their work in media related employment.

Indicative Module Content

Introduction to Media & Society: Media Sociology and the Critical Political Economy Perspective.

Elaboration of the importance of bringing a sociological perspective to the study of the relationship between media and society, and between society and the media. An overview of critical political perspectives of communications.

The Role of the Media in a Democracy: The Market & The State.

The Habermasian concept of the 'Public Sphere'. The efficacy of the Public Sphere in the era of transnational media conglomerates and the further commodification of information.

Media In The Public Interest & The Public Sphere.

Inquiring into the ideal characteristics one would expect to find in a media which operated within a democratic political system and reflected the public interest. Analysis of the tensions and potential conflict of interest between individual and collective journalistic ideals, and the necessity of ownership, profit and quarterly returns.

Agenda-Setting I (Does An Agenda Exist, If So How Does It Work): McCombs, Shaw and Subsequent Developments.

The media may not be successful in "telling people what to think", but they are "stunningly successful in telling people what to think about". Examining the available research from the discovery of the 'agenda-setting' function of the mass media. Analysis of agenda-setting research from around the world.

Agenda Setting II (So Who Sets The Agenda?): The Production Of Media Messages.

Having critically examined the existence and impact of the agenda-setting function of the mass media, this topic analyses the economic, political and cultural forces that determine what that agenda is and how it is formed.

Media Effects Research: The Event As Event And The Event As News.

How accurate is the representation of reality that the media presents? The event as event and the event as 'news'. Consonance in media reporting, the discrepancy between the experience of participating in a newsworthy event and how it is reported. The relationship between what is important and what the media reports as important.

Case Study: Structure: Mass Media, Civil Liberties and War.

Examining available research as to how ownership structures, the deregulatory environment, the profit and shareholder maximisation imperative and cultural norms, of particularly the USA, impact on the veracity, impartiality and believability of media messages and agendas. Analysing why these issues matter for democratic societies.

Assessment

This module will be assessed by one essay (Continuous Assessment: 40%) being a research-led essay based on module content critically discussed in tutorials with facilitated online academic journal searches, and by a written exam (Exam: 60%).