



INSTEP-WFU London

MEDIA, SOCIETY AND CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

While we continue to rely on the media for information, education and entertainment, their overwhelming presence in our lives has been the subject of critical debates. These are often linked to societal anxieties of the time: is reality television dumbing us down? Are social media addictive? Are streaming platforms catastrophic for the industry? Is surveillance and constant data breach the price we need to pay for connectivity?

This course will take these and other questions as starting points to explore how people and societies engage with media and digital technologies. We will examine key theoretical debates concerning media and communications: the Frankfurt School's critique of the "culture industries" and its implications for media power, the theories of taste and popular culture, the implications of social media for personal and social life, the uses and motivations of media use, the limits of digital surveillance, media representation, identity and the impact of the media in today's culture and society. The course will then explore how changing technological affordances may have changed our ideas of interpretation and participation, and how newer phenomena of streaming and bingeing or digital fandom link to theoretical and methodological debates surrounding the media. Finally, we will investigate who exactly is the "media audience" in the digital age – and confront those ideas with the changing, global digital landscape.

Course Structure

This course will consist of seminar discussions and tasks. Students are expected to have done the assigned readings before the class each week. For some of the classes, students will prepare short class presentation based on the assigned readings. Students are encouraged to refer to examples of media materials in their presentations (e.g. video clips, advertisements, newspaper articles etc.). Class presentations will count toward the course's final grade.

Assessment and submission deadlines

The final grade is calculated as follows:

Class presentations and participation: 20%

Media ethnography exercise: 40%

Final essay: 40%

Students are required to prepare **class presentations**, complete a **media ethnography exercise** and write a **final essay of 2,000 words**.