

Evolution of the Media in the 21st Century

Melanie Meunier, Professeur d'anglais

Résumé :

The media industry today, like most sectors, is forced to adapt to changing circumstances brought about, and accelerated, by the fourth industrial revolution. Not so long ago, the vast majority of people received the news by watching television or reading the written press. In the space of a few decades, the ways of accessing the news have exploded from broadcast news (CBS, NBC and ABC) to cable news (CNN, MSNBC, Fox News) to online media (including Youtube) and social networks. New technologies have revolutionized *what* is considered news, *who* reports the news, *how* newscasts are produced, and *how* ordinary people obtain the news. According to a 2020 Pew Research poll, 86% of Americans consult digital platforms for the news, and 42% of people under age 30 turn to social media for the news. Posting links to articles and "liking" them allows people to read only the news that reinforces their pre-existing personal opinions.

News outlets have had to adapt their offer to a faster-paced world of shorter attention spans (Twitter is the ultimate example), and they have had to compete with ordinary citizens who post videos and publish pieces on personal blogs. In addition, the free access to much of this information on the Internet has reduced subscriptions to traditional media, like newspapers, which in turn, have had to change their business models and find ways to remain profitable. One response has been to offer much of their material on the Internet at reduced cost. Another has been to increase the entertainment component to the detriment of more in-depth analysis of major issues. "Infotainment" has blurred the distinction between what is worthy of being considered news. For example, Donald Trump's frequent insults of his competitors and less than factual statements caused major networks to accord him a great deal of airtime rather than to cover serious issues, such as health policy, infrastructure and foreign policy. All of this has had a major impact on both society and people's trust in government and in the media.

The freedom of the press was enshrined in the First Amendment of the US Constitution and Thomas Jefferson, amongst others, repeatedly defended it as the foundational freedom upon which all other freedoms depend. In a letter to the Marquis de Lafayette in 1823, he wrote: "the only security of all is in a free press. The force of public opinion cannot be resisted, when permitted freely to be expressed." In today's media landscape of blogs and citizen journalism competing with traditional news outlets, this statement needs reassessing. Who controls the media and what impact is the new media landscape having on democratic societies? In the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election, Margaret Sullivan, journalist at the *Washington Post*, wrote: "... journalists must write and report aggressively and fearlessly and be willing to fight for access, getting involved with civil and media rights and backing officials that champion free expression."

This course will take the United States as an example, but comparisons with other countries will be encouraged. Numerous issues will be explored through group presentations, such as:

- Freedom of the press vs security issues
- Government censorship and surveillance
- Role and responsibility of the mainstream media
- Role and responsibility of social media platforms
- Role of Twitter in the Trump presidency
- Limits to the freedom of expression? (hate speech publications)
- Ethics: Whistleblowing (Wikileaks, Snowden, Panama Papers, etc.)
- The line between news and entertainment
- The rise of citizen journalism: pros and cons
- Media as elite organization: journalists mostly white, educated, urban
- How the American news media adapts its coverage in an increasingly multicultural society: problems of bias and discrimination
- Post-text future: the rise of audiocasts and videocasts

Bibliographie sélective :

- Barkho, Leon, *News from the BBC, CNN, and Al-Jazeera*, Hampton Press Inc., 2010
- Chayko, Mary, *Superconnected*, 2nd Edition, Sage, 2018
- Chomsky, Noam, *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda*, 2nd Edition, Seven Stories Press, 2002
- Cohen, Jeff, *Cable News Confidential: My Misadventures in Corporate Media*, PoliPoint Press, 2006
- Dice, Mark, *The True Story of Fake News: How the Mainstream Media Manipulates Millions*, The Resistance Manifesto, 2017
- Fuchs, Christian, *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd Edition, Sage, 2017
- Gordon, Janey, P. Rowinski, G. Stewart, *Br(e)aking the News : Journalism, Politics and New Media*, 2013
- Herman, Edward S. & Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Vintage, 1988
- Humphreys, Ashlee, *Social Media*, Oxford University Press, 2016
- Jamieson, K. H. & J.N. Cappella, *Echo Chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the Conservative Media Establishment*, Oxford UP, 2008
- Meikle, Graham, *Social Media*, Routledge, 2016
- O'Connor, Cailin & James O. Weatherall, *The Misinformation Age: How False Beliefs Spread*, Yale University Press, 2019

- Ott, Brian, Robert Mack, *Critical Media Studies: An Introduction*, Wiley Blackwell, 2020
- Potter, W. James, *Introduction to Media Literacy*, Sage, 2016
- Reed, T.V., *Digitized Lives*, Routledge, 2014
- Whittemore, Hank, *CNN: The Inside Story*, Little, Brown & Company, 1990
- Wolff, Michael, *Television is the New Television: The Unexpected Triumph of Old Media in the Digital Age*, Portfolio, 2015
- Vaidhyanathan, Siva, *Antisocial Media : How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy*, Oxford UP, 2018

Films (a few examples): *Good Night and Good Luck*, *CitizenFour Snowden*, *The Fifth Estate*, *Spotlight*, *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism*, *All the President's Men*, *Thank You for Smoking*, *The Pentagon Papers*

References for websites, audio-visual resources & articles will be available on Moodle.

Contact :

mmeunier@unistra.fr