

Sciences Po Strasbourg		
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École	de l'Université de Strasbourg
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The Evolution of the Media in the 21st Century

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ECTS : 3

Total Number of teaching hours : 24

Description

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, 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 get the news. 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. It is estimated that more than 60% of Americans obtain the news through Facebook, which is a platform for friends and family to communicate. Posting links to articles and "liking" them allows people to read only the news that reinforces their pre-existing personal opinions.

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 plans 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 constant insults of his competitors and less than factual statements during the 2016 election campaign caused major networks to accord him a great deal of air time 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.

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 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 pertaining to the media will be explored, such as :

- Freedom of the press vs security issues
- Media failures (example of the 2016 US presidential campaign or other)
- The new age of reporting (how journalists' jobs are evolving)
- Impact of new technology on the media
- Democratization vs professional production of the news
- Citizen reporters and the authenticity of information
- Role and responsibility of social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter)
- Ethics: Whistleblowing vs leaking (Wikileaks, Snowden, Chelsea Manning, Panama Papers)
- Net neutrality: pros and cons
- Spinning the news (stretching the facts, cherry-picking the facts, fake news, lying)
- The line between news and entertainment
- Limits to the freedom of expression? (hate speech publications)
- Media as elite organization: Disconnection with large swaths of the population; journalists: highly educated, based mostly in big cities on the coasts
- Post-text future? (Rise of audio and video -casts)