

COMM 346 | MEDIATING THE MESSAGE: SOCIAL MEDIA AND PEOPLE [IN GREECE]

Tentative Syllabus

CYA ATHENS SPRING 2024

Course Instructor(s): Dr. Michael Nevradakis

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Class Times: Tuesday & Thursday, 5:15-6:50 pm

Office Hours: online and by appointment

Course Description:

The first part of the course's title is inspired by a very influential book in the field of news production that has examined the influences exercised upon news making. This approach is revisited through the digital prism and the writable Web on which everyday people act as messengers of current affairs, sometimes life itself. Key changes are examined across the basic stages of news production.

The course examines how the explosion of social media/social networks has altered the traditional news media-audience relationship primarily in three areas:

1. The "fourth estate" and its watchdog role in the new digital media landscape.
2. The institutional sources and their function in message formation and dissemination.
3. The human factor and its evolution amidst intense technological changes.

The Arab Spring and "Occupy" in the US and the UK, as well as more recent examples, such as the #MeToo movement, are discussed in terms of the effect of social media/social networks in people's mobilizations and message dissemination, challenging the traditional status quo.

Furthermore, the course examines the evolution of social media in Greece and in particular during the years of the on-going economic, political, and social crisis that began in the late 2000s, which, however, as commonly argued, has its origins throughout the period that followed the restoration of democracy in the mid-1970s.

Following the "end" of the economic crisis in the 2018-19 period, social media in Greece have continued to play a substantial – and arguably divisive – role in the Greek public and political spheres during the COVID-19 pandemic, and through the burgeoning #MeToo movement in Greece, to name two examples.

It discusses the evolution of social media in the country and the juxtaposition between traditional sources such as government, institutions and media groups, and new digital media messaging systems ruled by public opinion. Greece represents a notable case study as a country that finds itself at the crossroads of the west and the east, between the EU, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and the Global South, and a country with, arguably, longstanding weaknesses in its public sphere and civil society, but a long tradition of social movements and activism which continues to the present time.

Greece is also a notable example of a country with relatively low broadband penetration (in the context of the EU) but particularly high usage of social media, including as sources of news and information, while levels of trust in traditional institutions and "mainstream" media are consistently low.

Course Approach:

Social media (or social networks) constitute the spear of the writable web that are perpetuating massive changes in traditional mediating models.

Human and institutional communication is going through tremendous changes, with individual wisdom directly competing with mass media operators.

Peer online activity and shared material create multiple instances of media experiences for users who are engaged in a constant selection process, either browsing on a homepage of an online newspaper or through Facebook posts.

Traditional media, despite their heavy online investments, are challenged in terms of their role as leading intermediaries between society, institutional sources and reality. Studies have suggested that peer-shared material via deep links to websites constitute a significant point of entry for an increasing population of social network users, who tend to ignore prearranged syntheses of news stories on mainstream web portals.

The Greek case:

During the crisis years in Greece, online public dialogue has experienced a substantial growth, not only amongst people but also between audiences and established media that, increasingly see news content being put under scrutiny (even ridicule) by producers-users, who are particularly active online.

Traditional political forces have similar experiences, trying to keep up with developments.

During the crisis and post-crisis years in Greece, social media users/voters have boosted political discourse via social networks, contributing, sharing or commenting on on-going developments. At the same time, crisis at a political level has caused the disintegration of old political formations accompanied by the demise of, until then, dominant political rhetoric and messaging systems. Social media functions of mainstream politics remained in the margins of creativity, playing a minimal role amongst potential voters.

Moreover, what is posing as extremely relevant is the role of social media/networks in political campaigning and civic society. The "Occupy" movement, the "Arab Spring," as well as mobilizations of the "Indignants" Movement in Athens were both heavily influenced by users' sharing of views, call-for-action announcements, and anti-austerity discourse.

In turn, other global movements that have been prominent on social media, such as #MeToo, have made their way to Greece and have contribute to a reshaping of public discourse around previously sensitive or taboo issues.

Working questions:

The rise of social media as a new public sphere—under Habermas' perspective as well as through the social capital prism—has introduced new parameters and has challenged conventional theories, posing questions, such as:

- To what degree do Facebook, Instagram, and other popular social networks constitute public spheres?
- What is the effect of social networks on social capital? Or to put it differently: Is there any social capital in social networks?

Questions related to news representation as well as news content management also emerge:

- How are Greece and the Greek crisis depicted on social media?
- What is the role of people's voice as expressed through everyday online activity?
- How does mainstream media react to the digital agora?
- How Greek institutional sources and major media players are keeping up with developments?

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- define key changes taking place in the media industry field triggered by the advent of social media;
- distinguish social media effects via major social and political movements throughout the world;
- analyze public discourse on new and traditional media platforms;
- navigate their way through Greece's media messaging system in an efficient way; and...
- critically evaluate contemporary rhetoric and reality regarding the Greek crisis.

Course Requirements:

You are expected to complete all required readings indicated in the syllabus, prior to the start of our first class meeting each week. Supplemental materials may at times be posted on Moodle, which will be announced in class. You are expected to attend all classes and to regularly participate in class discussions.

Course assessments will include the following:

- **Midterm examination (take-home):** A take-home examination based on key concepts from our course materials, readings, and class discussions. Details to be posted on Moodle. You will select from a list of topics which will be provided to you. Due date: Thursday, March 14.
- **Final examination (take-home):** A take-home examination based on key concepts from our course materials, readings, and class discussions. Details to be posted on Moodle. You will select from a list of topics which will be provided to you. Due date: Thursday, May 16.
- **Individual project:** you will research and write a fully researched (APA style) paper of 1,500,000 words (excluding bibliography) on a topic of your choice related to the course material, with an in-class creative presentation. Due date: Tuesday, May 14 – presentation Thursday, May 9.

Evaluation and Grading:

Your grade for this course will be based on the following distribution:

- Attendance and participation: **20%**
- Midterm examination: **25%**
- Final examination: **25%**
- Individual project: **30%**

Evaluation Criteria - Course Assessments:

Grades are intended to give you a sense of the quality of a particular piece of work. Specifically:

An "A" paper/examination will do all of the following:

- Carefully and thoroughly analyze the existing literature.
- Carefully and thoroughly evaluate the various viewpoints.
- Reaches judicious conclusions, which are fully substantiated.

A "B" paper/examination will do a couple of the following:

- Reasonably analyses the existing literature.
- Offers evaluation of the evident viewpoints.
- Reaches a number of conclusions, which are substantiated.

A "C" paper/examination will do many of the following:

- Fail to present the existing literature.
- Misinterprets readings, evidence, and arguments.
- Offers a superficial evaluation of the evident viewpoints. - Reaches a number of fallacious conclusions.

CYA Regulations and Accommodations:

Attendance Policy

CYA regards attendance in class and on-site (in Athens or during field study trips) as essential. Absences are recorded and have consequences. Illness or other such compelling reasons which result in absences should be reported immediately to the Student Affairs Office.

Academic Accommodations

If you are a registered (with your home institution) student with a disability and you are entitled to learning accommodation, please inform the Office of Academic Affairs and make sure that your school forwards the necessary documentation.

Policy on Original Work

Unless otherwise specified, all submitted work must be your own original work. Any ideas taken from the work of others must be clearly identified as quotations, paraphrases, summaries, figures etc., and accurate internal citations and/or captions (for visuals) as well as an accompanying bibliography must be provided (Check the Student Handbook, pg. 7).

Use of Laptops

In-class or onsite use of laptops and other devices is permitted if this facilitates course-related activities such as note-taking, looking up references, etc. Laptop or other device privileges will be suspended if devices are not used for class-related work.

Religious Holidays

CYA recognizes that there are important religious holidays that affect students and their participation in CYA classes, activities, and trips. Some students may wish to attend services, while others may have obligations (such as fasting or other personal rituals) that interfere with their academic engagement. Students are required to inform both CYA and their professors of the religious holidays that they wish to observe during the first two weeks of classes, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Class Schedule

Schedule is tentative and subject to change - Specifics regarding the readings, including which to focus on and which to skim/glance through, will be provided in class. Readings will be posted on Moodle.

Week	Dates	Topic / Readings / Assignments Due
1	Tue. Jan. 30 & Thu. Feb. 1	Mediating the Message - Introduction Fuchs 2013.
2	Tue. Feb. 6 & Thu. Feb. 8	Media, the writable web, and the network society Burnett & Marshall 2003. Castells 2004. Occupy Wall Street case study.
	Tue. Feb. 14 & Thu. Feb. 16	No class meetings
3	Tue. Feb. 20 & Thu. Feb. 22	Digital literacy, inequality, and the generation gap Beard – What makes "Generation Z" so different? (video) boyd 2014. Jackson 2001. Kress 2003. Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings: The millennial generation: A demographic bridge to America's diverse future Robinson et al. 2020.
4	Tue. Feb. 27 & Thu. Feb. 29	Politics and campaigning Axford 2001. Benski et al. 2013. Dahlgren 2001. House of Commons – Disinformation and fake news 2019.
5	Tue. Mar. 5 & Thu. Mar. 7	The networked public sphere Fraser 1990. Green 2002. Habermas 1991 (excerpts). Nevradakis 2018 (Chapter 2 – excerpts). Papacharissi 2008.

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- 6 Tue. Mar. 12 & Thu. Mar. 14 **The 'news function' of social networks**
Fog 2013.
Shoemaker & Reese 2014.
MIDTERM EXAM (March 14)
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- 7 Tue. Mar. 19 & Thu. Mar. 21 **The Twitterization of Politics**
Bennett & Segerberg 2013.
Conway, Kenski and Wang 2015.
Dijck 2013.
Juris 2004.
Ronson – How one tweet could ruin your life (video)
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- 8 Tue. Mar. 26 & Thu. Mar. 28 **The Greek case, part 1: Greek media**
Hallin and Mancini 2012.
Kalogeropoulos, Rori and Dimitrakopoulou 2021.
Nevradakis 2018 (Chapter 4).
Nevradakis – Investigative series on Greek media
Reuters Institute reports on news and media consumption in Greece
Stiglitz 2017.
Veneti and Karadimitriou 2013.
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- Tue. Apr. 2 & Thu. Apr. 4** **No class meetings**
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- 9 Tue. Apr. 9 & Thu. Apr. 11 **The Greek case, part 2: Greek public sphere and civil society in a time of protest**
Boucas and Iosifidis 2020.
Nevradakis 2018 (Chapters 5, 6).
Nevradakis 2022.
Theocharis, Vitoratou and Sajuria 2017.
Vatikiotis and Milioni 2013.
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- 10 Tue. Apr. 16 & Thu. Apr. 18 **The Greek case, part 3: Greek protest movements and social media**
Hänska and Bauchowitz 2018.
Trere, Jeppesen and Mattoni 2017.
Papa and Milioni 2016.
Vatikiotis 2011.
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11	Tue. Apr. 23 & Thu. Apr. 25	The Greek case, part 4: Campaigns and social media Hänska and Bauchowitz 2018. Mylonas 2017. Jackson, Lilleker and Veneti 2019 Veneti, Lilleker and Jackson 2021. Tsekeris and Zeri 2018.
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**Tue. Apr. 30 &
Thu. May 2** **No class meetings**

12	Tue. May 7 & Thu. May 9	End-of-semester and final examination review (May 7) Final project presentations (May 9)
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**Tuesday,
May 14** **FINAL PROJECT DUE (by 11:59 pm)**

**Thursday,
May 16** **FINAL EXAM**

N.B.: The course schedule, in terms of subjects and readings, is tentative and may be subject to change to benefit student learning and to keep up to date with current research.

Course Readings

Required:

- Axford, B. (2001). 'The Transformation of Politics or Anti-Politics?' In Axford, B. & Huggins, R. (eds) *New Media and Politics*. London: Sage.
- Bennett, W.L. and A. Segerberg (2013). *The Logic of Connective Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Benski, T., L. Langman, I. Perugorria, B. Tejerina (2013). 'From the Streets and Squares to Social Movement Studies: What Have We Learned?' *Current Sociology* 61 (4).
- Boucas, D. and P. Iosifidis (2020). 'Alternative Digital Journalism in Greece Under Conditions of Austerity'. In A. Veneti and A. Karatzogianni (eds), *The Emerald Handbook of Digital Media in Greece*. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Boyd, D. (2014) *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Burnett, R. and P.D. Marshall (2003). *Web Theory: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Castells, M. (2004) 'Informationalism, Networks, and the Network Society: A Theoretical Blueprint.' In *The Network Society: A Cross Cultural Perspective*. Northampton: Edward Elgar.
- Conway, B.A., K. Kenski and D. Wang (2015). The Rise of Twitter in the Political Campaign: Searching for Intermedia Agenda-Setting Effects in the Presidential Primary. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 1.
- Dahlgren, P. (2001). 'The Transformation of Democracy?' In Axford, B. & Huggins, R. (eds) *New Media and Politics*. London: Sage.
- Dijck, J. van. (2013). *The Culture of Connectivity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fog, A. (2013). The Supposed and the Real Role of Mass Media in Modern Democracy: an Evolutionary Model.
- Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy. *Social Text*, 25/26, 56-80.
- Frey, W.H. (2018). *The Millennial Generation: A Demographic Bridge to America's Diverse Future*. Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings.
- Fuchs, C. (2013). *Social media: An introduction*. London: Sage.
- Green, L.R. (2002). *Communication, Technology and Society*. London: Sage.
- Habermas, J. (1991). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. The MIT Press.
- Hallin, D.C. and P. Mancini (2012). 'The Mediterranean of Polarized Pluralist Model'. in Hallin, D.C. and P. Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Hänksa, M. and S. Bauchowitz (2018). '#ThisIsACoup: The emergence of an anti-austerity hashtag across Europe's Twittersphere.' In L. Basu, S. Schifferes and S. Knowles, *The Media and Austerity: Comparative Perspectives*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- House of Commons, Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee (2019). *Disinformation and 'fake news': Final Report*.
- Jackson, D., D. Lilleker and A. Veneti (2019). *Social Media Use in Political Communication in Greece*. Bournemouth University Center for Politics & Media Research.
- Jackson, T.A. (2001). 'Towards a New Media Aesthetic.' In Trend D. (ed.) *Reading Digital Culture*. Massachusetts: Blackwell.
- Juris, J.S. (2004). 'Networked Social Movements: Global Movements for Global Justice'. In Castell, M. (ed.) *The Network Society: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Kalogeropoulos, A., L. Rori and D. Dimitrakopoulou (2021). "'Social Media help Me Distinguish between Truth and Lies": News Consumption in the Polarised and Low-trust Media Landscape of Greece. *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 26.
- Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the New Media Age*. London: Routledge.
- Mylonas, Y. (2017). 'Social Media as Propaganda Tools: The Greek Conservative Party and National Elections.' In M. Barisione and A. Michailidou (eds), *Social Media and European Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nevradakis, M. (2018). *From the Polis to Facebook: Social Media and the Development of a New Public Sphere*. The University of Texas at Austin.
- Nevradakis, M. (2022). 'Radio's Role as an Alternative Online Medium and Site Activism during a Time of Crisis: The Case of Greece's Radiobubble.' *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* Vol. 29 2.
- Papa, V. and D. Milioni (2016). 'I don't Wear Blinkers, All Right?' *The Multiple Meanings of Civic Identity in the Indignados and the Role of Social Media*, *Javnost - The Public*, 23:3, 290-306.
- Papacharissi, Z. (2008). *The Virtual Sphere 2.0*. Routledge.
- Robinson, L. J. et al. (2020). *Digital inequalities 3.0: Emergent inequalities in the information age*. First Monday, University of Illinois at Chicago Library.
- Shoemaker, P. J., & Reese, S. D. (2014). *Mediating the message in the 21st century*. London: Routledge.
- Stiglitz, J.E. (2017). *Toward a Taxonomy of Media Capture*. In A. Schiffrin (ed.), *In the Service of Power: Media Capture and the Threat to Democracy*. Washington: The Center for International Media Assistance.
- Theocharis, Y., S. Vitoratou and J. Sajuria (2017). 'Civil Society in Times of Crisis: Understanding Collective Action Dynamics in Digitally-Enabled Volunteer Networks'. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* Vol. 22 5.
- Trere, E., S. Jeppesen and A. Mattoni (2017). 'Comparing digital protest media imaginaries: Anti-austerity movements in Spain, Italy & Greece.' *Global Justice to Occupy and Podemos: Mapping Three Stages of Contemporary Activism*, Vol. 15, No. 2.
- Vatikiotis, P. and D. L. Milioni (2013). 'From Inside the Rhizome: Mapping the Greek Alternative Mediascape.' *International Journal of Communication* Vol 13.
- Veneti, A. and A. Karadimitriou (2013). 'Policy and Regulation in the Media Landscape: the Greek Paradigm Concentration of Media Ownership Versus the Right to Information.' *Management Dynamics in Knowledge Economy, College of Management, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration*, vol. 1 (3), pages 439-457, December.
- Veneti, A., D.G. Lilleker and D. Jackson (2021). *Between Analogue and Digital: A Critical Exploration of Strategic Social Media Use in Greek Election Campaigns*. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, Vol. 19 1.
- Tsekeris, Ch. and P. Zeri (2018). *Investigating the Macedonia naming dispute in the Twitter era: Implications for the Greek identity crisis*. *Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe*, No 127. London: European Institute, LSE.
- Vatikiotis, P. (2011) 'Networking activism: Implications for Greece.' *Estudos em Comunicação* 10.

Additional readings:

Additional pieces of literature and informational material will be made available on the course page on the Moodle platform. You will be informed in class about new Moodle postings.

CYA advising services for Spring 2024

To be announced.