

Note on the course entitled: “Media & Society: The Economics, Politics, Ethics and Technologies of Mass Communications” taught to the students of the PGP (Post-Graduate Programme) at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, by Paranjy Guha Thakurta

Course Philosophy and Objective

The objective of the course would be to apprise students about the economic, political and social impact of the mass media on society in general and Indian society in particular. The course will provide a broad global perspective on the working of the media while explaining specific local elements in developed and developing countries. The course would explain the commercial as well as the aesthetic considerations that influence the functioning of organizations engaged in mass communications. It would historically review the way in which information and communication technologies have impacted the mass media and how ethical issues relating to the media have evolved over time. The course would look at the ways in which the internet or the worldwide web have not merely become an important mass medium in itself but the manner in which the new medium is exerting a profound influence on existing media by making these more personal and participative.

The course would also consider the market-oriented, commercial considerations that impact the mass media which is often perceived to be in contradiction to the role of the media in providing a public service. The course would introduce students to foundational works on the political economy of the media while highlighting patterns of interface between media organizations and society. Specifically, the course would look at the socially-constructed nature of news that challenges ideas and notions of news as being something “out there” which is “objective” or “value-free”. It would highlight the “power” of the media in ideological terms and the corporatization of the media. The course further examines the practical and pragmatic implications for organizations and management professionals of the use of fast-changing technologies for mass communications.

Lesson Plan

Session 1:

An introduction to the course

What is communication? What is mass communication?

The challenges of communicating across cultures

Readings:

McLuhan, Marshall and Lapham, Lewis H. “Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man”, MIT Press, 1964

McLuhan and Fiore, Quentin, "The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects", Bantam Books, 1967

McLuhan and Powers, Bruce R., "The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century", Oxford University Press, USA, 1986

A Note on Effective Communication by Paranjay Guha Thakurta

Schudson, M. (2003). The Sociology of News. New York: W. W. Norton.

Dan Berkowitz (1997). Social Meanings of News. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Session 2:

What is news?

Relative strengths and weaknesses of different mass media – print, radio, television, cinema and the internet

The political economy of the media

Readings:

"Complete Reporter: Fundamentals of News Gathering, Writing and Editing" by Julian Harriss, Kelly Leiter and Stanley Johnson, Allyn and Bacon, USA, 7th Edition, 1999

"News Writing: News and the News Industry" by George A. Howe, Houghton Mifflin, College Division, 5th Edition, 1994

Fishman, M. (1980). Manufacturing the news. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Gans, H. J. (1979). Deciding what's news. New York: Pantheon Books.

Session 3:

History of media technology: From the printing press to the I-pod

Readings:

"Making Sense of Media: An Introduction to Mass Communication" by George Rodman, Allyn & Bacon, 1st Edition, 2000

Session 4:

Comparing the media in developed and developing countries: the US and India

What is unique about India's experience with television

Screening of 30-minute documentary film: "Idiot Box or Window of Hope" directed by Paranjay Guha Thakurta and produced by the Public Service Broadcasting Trust in 2003

“The global media: The new missionaries of corporate capitalism. Cassell: NY, ”
Herman, E.S. & McChesney, R. W. (1997)

“Media Ethics: Truth, Fairness and Objectivity: Making and Breaking News” by
Paranjoy Guha Thakurta, Oxford University Press, New Delhi (Second enlarged edition)

Session 5:

History of media ethics

Readings:

“Making Sense of Media: An Introduction to Mass Communication” by George Rodman,
Allyn & Bacon, 1st Edition, 2000

“Mass Communication Ethics: Decision Making in Postmodern Culture” by Larry Z.
Leslie, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, USA, (2nd Edition), 2004

Session 6:

Reconciling ethics and commerce

Screening of 30-minute documentary film: “Grabbing Eyeballs: What’s Unethical About Television News in India” directed by Paranjoy Guha Thakurta and produced by the Public Service Broadcasting Trust in 2007

Session 7:

Student presentations on

- (a) Resolving ethical and commercial considerations in media organizations
- (b) Reality television programmes: Should there be curbs on content?
- (c) Wikileaks’ Julian Assange and Edward Snowden: Terrorists or freedom fighters?

Session 8:

Organizational practices in media industries

Linking culture and strategy: the cases of BBC and CNN

Readings:

“The Entrepreneurial M-Form: Strategic Integration in Global Media Firms” by Thomas R. Eisenmann and Joseph L Bower, “Organizational Science”, May/June 2000

“Balancing Act: Learning from Organizing Practices in Cultural Industries” by Joseph Lampel, Theresa Lant and Jamal Shamsie, “Organizational Science”, May/June 2000

“Exploring the Link Between Culture and Strategy in Media Organizations: the cases of the BBC and CNN” by Lucy King, Journal of Mass Communication, Vol. 2, No. II, 2000

Gandy, O. H. (1982). *Beyond agenda setting: Information subsidies and public policy*, Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Session 9:

**Coexistence of old and new media technologies
Case study of video-on-demand in Hong Kong**

Readings:

“The Institutional Conditions for Technological Change: Fiber to the Home” by Robert Loube, “Journal of Economic Issues”, December 1991

“New Technologies, New Markets: The Launch of Hongkong Telecom’s Video-on-Demand” by Peter Lovelock, Centre for Asian Business Cases, 1998

“Journalism must go back to the trenches, rediscover the basics” by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Inter-American Press Association, reprinted in the 10th Anniversary issue of “Outlook”

Session 10:

**Media Convergence: How the internet is influencing the ‘old’ media
Can newspapers survive? (Including a film show)**

Readings:

“Convergence Processes, Value Constellations and Integration Strategies in the Multimedia Business” by Bernd W. Wirtz, Journal of Media Management, Vol 1, No 1, 1999

The future of the worldwide web: personal and participatory Media

Readings:

A series of eight (8) articles published in “The Economist”, April 20, 2006 by Andreas Kluth entitled:

1. Among the audience
2. It’s the links, stupid
3. Compose yourself
4. The Wiki principle
5. Heard on the Street
6. Wonders of the Metaverse
7. The gazillion-dollar question
8. What sort of revolution?”

The Economist, July 9-15, 2011, “Back to the coffee house: A 14-page special report on the future of news”

Session 11:

Understanding the media market:

Why media products and services are different from other products and services

Advertising and media planning

Legal issues concerning the media: censorship, copyright and plagiarism

Readings:

Smith, P. R., "Marketing Communications", Kogan Page (London), 1996

Surmanek, Jim, "Introduction to Advertising Media", NTC business Books, (Chicago), 1993

Copley, Paul, "Marketing Communications Management: Concepts and Theories, Cases and Practices", Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann (Massachusetts), 2004

Lessig, Lawrence, "Free Culture", Pnguin Press, New York, 2004

Bagdikian, Ben H., "The Media Monopoly", Beacon Press (Uckfield), 2000

Campbell, Richard, "Media Culture", Bedford/St. Martin (Boston), 2002

Rodman, George, "Making Sense of the Media", Allyn and Bacon (Boston), 2001

Session 12:

Examination: Writing an essay

Evaluation

Course participants will be evaluated on the basis of:

1. Presentation (mid-way through the course)
2. A concept/reflection paper on any topic given in the course outline: 1,000-1,500 words (to be submitted before the end of the course)
3. Essay (at the end of the course)

Each of the above would carry a weight of 33.3 per cent marks. The presentations would be peer-evaluated, while the concept/reflection paper and, essay would be evaluated solely by the instructor.