

# SOCI 390

## Special Topics in Sociology:

### Community Media and Social Change

#### Summer 2022

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Summer 2022, May-June  
Online course  
M: 2.30–5.00pm (Live class on Zoom)

Instructor: Dr. Sarah Wagner  
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### Course description

This course is about how media owned and distributed by community groups influence and are influenced by broader social, technological, and political contexts. When media services like radio and television stations are community owned and operated, they can be used to share information that is overlooked or dismissed by mainstream media institutions. Community media have supported marginalized groups to gain voice in public debates and to draw attention to social injustices. The rapidly changing arena of Internet media has created new opportunities and new challenges for community media practitioners. In this course, we will examine how the appropriation of media technologies by community groups around the globe have developed into forms of social and political action.

### Themes covered

1. The politics of media participation  
You will be introduced to theoretical perspectives in community and alternative media studies and the broader historical context of local media initiatives. We will critically reflect on ‘community’, ‘development’, and ‘participation’.
2. Community media practices  
We will examine the role of community media projects in relation to three main areas: civic society and the public sphere; cultural revitalization; and social movements.
3. Challenges and opportunities  
The final unit of this course will look in detail at the social, political, and technological contexts that create challenges and opportunities for community media projects. We will consider how community media practitioners negotiate technology affordances and how media policies can create space for local ownership and digital self-determination.

## Course objectives

This course will give you the opportunity to apply your sociological imagination to community media initiatives; draw connections between global information flows, digital inequalities, and social marginalization; reflect on narratives about 'development' and 'community'; and critically evaluate how media policies and technical systems create and deny space for alternative media.

## Format

The course will be delivered entirely online and will combine lectures in real time with asynchronous learning activities.

### **Synchronous session:**

Mondays at 2.30-5.00pm on UVic's Zoom Service: live lecture on the week's theme and discussion with peers.

### **Asynchronous activities:**

You will be asked to dedicate around 2 hours between Wednesday and Friday each week to view multimedia materials and engage in online discussion with your classmates. Weekly multimedia materials will include short video lectures, peer presentations, and links to community media examples.

## Materials

Assigned readings will be listed in the course syllabus and made available on Brightspace. In a typical week you will be asked to read three academic articles or book chapters in preparation for the live lecture. You will also be asked to examine the contents of a weekly multimedia pack following the live lecture, as outlined above.

## Evaluation

Course evaluation will be based on weekly commentaries about the assigned readings (15%), a group video presentation or report (multiple formats are accepted) (30%), participation in online discussion (5%), and a final paper (50%). You will be guided through the preparation of your final paper, which you will be asked to submit in three stages: proposal (5%), extended abstract (10%), and final paper (35%).

*\* This outline is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. Detailed course outlines will be made available for all registered students on the first day of class. Only those outlines are to be considered official.*

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**We acknowledge and respect the ləkʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.**