

SOCI 220¹

Media and Contemporary Society

Instructor: Dr. Midori Ogasawara

Course Description:

We live in media-saturated societies, where we understand the world, communicate with others, shape emotions and opinions, and create identities through mediated information. The ubiquity of media has transformed our social lives along with the spread of digital technologies, especially under the COVID-19 pandemic: we increasingly study, work and play on digital platforms. Then, how do media inform our understanding of the world, others, and the self? This course provides an overview of global media structure and organizations, and critically discusses key issues of mass media from a sociological perspective, with a special focus on digital technologies and news production. We will learn the historical development of mass media and understand communication theories to identify what is really new about digital media. Major information and communication technologies have diffused through global crises like wars, such as radio and cinema, and have been promoted for political and economic reasons, such as stealth advertisement. Social media opened up opportunities for marginalized peoples to raise their voices, while everyday posting is exploited by industry, and hate speech and fake news go viral. Through historically and technologically comparative approaches, we will discover political, economic and social dynamics of today's media and explore a better way to participate.

Course Objectives:

This course aims to improve media literacy as well as ethical media participation in the digital era. You will obtain critical thinking of mainstream media and social media, enhanced abilities to identify reliable information and resources, and to avoid producing or receiving harmful effects of media. This course is also designed to improve your writing skills as a practice of digital citizenship. Whether digital or not, words are still powerful way to deliver messages, convince people, or grow solidarity. I have extensive experience in investigative journalism, from which approaches and ethics will be drawn.

¹ This outline is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. A detailed course outline will be made available in the first day of class. Only that outline is to be considered official.

Course Pre-requisites:

SOCI 100A&B Introduction to Sociology is *recommended* prior to taking this course, but all students are welcome.

Topics May Include:

Social media (Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook), digital platforms (Google or Amazon), information and communication technologies, global media structure, news production, investigative journalism, fake news, hate speech, personalized filter, social memory, freedom of expression, whistleblowing.

Required Resources May Include:

Textbook: TBA. All other required readings will be made available via Brightspace.