SOCI 220
Media and Contemporary Society

Instructor: Dr. Robert Neubauer

Course Description:
This course explores the relationship between media and information communication technologies (ICT’s), society and the individual. It examines how different forms of media and communication influence the ways we live and shapes how we understand both ourselves and the world around us. It draws on diverse perspectives from sociology and media studies – including political economy, critical theory, and cultural studies – to examine key issues related to contemporary media like news journalism, Hollywood film, advertising, videogames, digital platforms, and social media. It examines how these media forms simultaneously shape, and are shaped by, relations of political, economic, and cultural power.

Questions This Course Will Explore:
- How do different forms of contemporary media represent, distort, and/or shape our social identities and our understanding of the world around us?
- To what extent can different media forms and patterns of representation either reinforce or challenge the power of particular social groups and institutions? Conversely, how do particular social groups and institutions influence the development of these media forms?
- How do different economic models of media ownership and organization affect the relations between journalism, propaganda and a democratic society?
- Do Hollywood and other Western media industries still dominate international media systems in a globalised world?
- How has the development of the internet and social media changed the way many people consume and produce media and culture? How does this affect our own social identities and understandings of the world, while creating new possibilities for alternative media, user-generated media, and social movement organizing?
- How has the rise of ‘platform giants’ (Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple, etc.) contributed to the development of new modes of government and corporate data surveillance, targeted marketing, social movement organizing, and digital propaganda?
- How does advertising and consumer culture shape our social identities and understanding of the world? Is advertising-driven social media truly ‘free’ for users?

Course Outcomes/Objectives:
Students will engage with these topics through course readings, lectures, class activities, class discussion, a final research paper, and a final exam.

Required Resources Include: