

SOCI 450
Political Economy of Information and Communication
Fall 2004

Koç University
School of Arts and Sciences

Instructor: Fatoş Gökşen
Meetings: T, Th 12:30-13:45
Office: SOS 226 ext. 1311
Office Hours:, Wednesday 10-12 or by appointment

Course Description

This course explores topics in the political economy of information and communication in contemporary society. The course is roughly divided into two parts. Part I examines the concept of information; it analyzes information as a commodity and as a public good. By focusing on problems in the production, distribution and sale of information, this part seeks to develop an appreciation of the importance of power in relationships between producers, owners and consumers. Also in this part ambiguous nature of the Internet is explored in its relation to capitalism and democracy. Part II emphasizes the forces in the production of media content (non-fiction and fiction) and specifically examines the flow of communication in the Third World.

Course Evaluation

Grades in the course are to be assigned on the basis of class participation (10 points), four short essays (15 points each), and a final paper (30 points).

Class participation: You are required to attend lectures regularly, participate class discussions actively and to do assigned readings prior to each week's classes. Attendance is mandatory. The students who fail to attend 1/3 of classes and discussion sessions may get an automatic F.

Short essays: These will constitute of answers to one or two questions given by the instructor. Your essays should be typed, double-spaced, and five pages or less. Late papers will automatically be penalized 2 points.

Final paper: You are expected to complete a final paper. You are required to hand in the proposal (2 pages) of your paper and present it in the class prior to completion of the papers.

Course Materials

There are a substantial number of readings from several books. The readings should be available on reserve in the Koc University Library. The books from which the readings are taken are as follows;

Mosco, Vincent. *The Political Economy of Communication*. London: Sage Publications, 1996.

Mosco, V., and Wasko, Janet (eds.). *The Political Economy of Information*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.

Gandy, Oscar. *The Panoptic Sort*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1993.

Webster, Frank. *Theories of the Information Society*, New York: Routledge, 1995.

Webster, Frank, *Culture and Politics in the Information Age*, Routledge, 2000.

- Curran, J., and Gurevitch, M. (eds.) *Mass Media and Society*, London: Edward Arnold, 1991.
- Gurevitch, M., Bennet, T., Curran, J., and Woolacott, J. (eds.) *Culture, Society and the Media*, New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Stevenson, Nick. *Understanding Media Cultures: Social Theory and Mass Communication*, London: Sage, 1995.
- Morley, David. *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies*, New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Reeves, Geoffrey. *Communications and the Third World*, London: Routledge, 1993.
- Levy, M. R., and Gurevitch, M. *Defining Media Studies: Reflections on the Future of the Field*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Rheingold, H. *The Virtual Community*, Harper-Prennial, 1999.
- Porter, D. *Internet Culture*, Routledge, 1997.
- Tomlinson, J., *Cultural Imperialism*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.
- Herman and McChesney, *Global Media; New Missionaries of Corporate Capitalism*, Cassell, 1997.
- Loader, B.D. *Cyberspace Divide: Equality, agency and policy in the information society*. Routledge, 1998.
- B.N. Hague and B.D. Loader, *Digital Democracy*, Routledge, 1998.
- Luke, T. *The Politics of Cyberspace*, Routledge, 1998.
- Etzioni, A., *Limits of Privacy*, Basic Books, 2001.
- B. Kahin and C. Nesson, *Borders in Cyberspace*, The MIT Press, 1997.

Course Outline

PART I

Political Economy

- Week 1: Introduction.
V. Mosco, "What is political economy?"
Meehan, Mosco, and Wasko, "Rethinking Political Economy: Change and Continuity" in Levy and Gurevitch.

Information and Idea of Information Society

- Week 2-3: What is Information? Thinking about Information. Consideration of information as a commodity, as a public good, as the product of labor, and the associated problems.
Schiller, "How to Think about Information" in Mosco and Wasko, Chp.2
Bates, "Information as an Economic Good: Sources of Individual and Social Value", In Mosco and Wasko, Chp.4.
Gandy, "Information and Power" in Gandy, Chp.2.
- Week 4-5: Information Society
"Information and the Idea of Information Society" in Webster, Chp.2
"Information and Urban Challenge: Manuel Castells" in Webster, Chp.9

FIRST SHORT ESSAY DUE OCTOBER 21, THURSDAY

Cyberspace Divide

- Week 6 Rheingold, H. "Disinformacracy" in (ed.) H. Rheingold, *The Virtual Community*, Porter, D. "Cyber democracy, internet and the public sphere" in *Internet Culture*, Moore, R. "Democracy and cyberspace" in (ed.) B.N. Hague and B.D. Loader, *Digital Democracy*.
- Week 7-8 Haywood, T. "Global networks and myth of equality" in (ed.) Loader, B.D. *Cyberspace Divide: Equality, agency and policy in the information society*. Luke, T. "The politics of digital inequality" in *The Politics of Cyberspace*,

SECOND SHORT ESSAY DUE NOVEMBER 23, TUESDAY
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- Week 9 Reinderberg, J. "Governing networks and rule making in cyberspace" in (ed.) B. Kahin and C. Nesson, *Borders in Cyberspace*. Etzioni, "Deciphering Encrypted Messages" in *Limits of Privacy*.

PART II

Political Economy of Communication

- Week 10-11 Golding and Murdock, "Culture, Communications, and Political Economy" in Curran and Gurevitch.
Media Organizations and the Power of the Media
Murdock, "Large Corporations and the control of the Communication Industries" in Gurevitch et al., Chp.5
Curran, "Mass Media and Democracy: A Reappraisal" in Curran, Chp.5
Herman and McChesney, "Global media in the late 1990s" in *Global Media; New Missionaries of Corporate Capitalism*.

Political Economy of Audience

- Week 12 "Critical Perspectives within Audience Research" in Stevenson, Chp.3
Livingstone, "Audience Reception: The role of the viewer in retelling romantic drama" in Curran and Gurevitch, Chp.14

Globalization of Communication

- Week 13 "Globalization of Communication" Thompson, pp. 149-178.
Tomlinson, J. "Media Imperialism" in *Cultural Imperialism*,
- Week 14 Sreberny-Mohammadi, "The global and the local in international communications" in Curran and Gurevitch.

THIRD SHORT ESSAY DUE DECEMBER 23, THURSDAY
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Please be sure that you are familiar with the University Academic Regulations and the

Regulations for Student Disciplinary Matters. Policies related to excused absences, cheating, plagiarism, withdrawal, and incompletes can be found in these documents. As students and faculty in the Koc University, we are all responsible for adhering to these policies.

And finally, I value your comments regarding the development of the course. If you are particularly pleased or dissatisfied with some aspect of this class, I encourage you to speak with me. My performance as your teacher will only improve when I am provided with timely feedback.