Course title: Media Politics: Structures and Case-Studies in Germany and Europe

Language of instruction: English

Contact hours: 45

ECTS-Credits: 5  U.S. semester credits: 3

Course description
This course introduces its participants to mass media systems and structures in Germany and Europe and provides them with the analytical tools and background knowledge to assess the ways in which the mass media and politics interact and thus shape each other.

We will start with an overview of the different structures of mass media (public/private) in Germany and selected European countries, including how they have historically developed and particularly which political ideas have shaped the frameworks in which media institutions and individuals operate. At the same time, we will take a critical look at how the media in turn have shaped and are still shaping the ways in which the political process works and presents itself to the public. Historical and current case-studies will help us analyse the manifold points of interaction between media and politics. Throughout the course, students will also have the opportunity to compare European and American media politics and to ask whether there may be trends and influences across the Atlantic (one or both ways) that are shaping today’s politics and mass media on both sides.

Student profile
Second-semester sophomore or above

Prerequisites
None

Course Requirements
Midterm Exam: 20%
Term Paper: 30%
Final Exam: 25%
Class Participation (includes 2 Independent Project Reports): 25%
FU/BEST Program

Literature
- Street, John: Mass Media, Politics and Democracy (2nd ed.), Basingstoke 2011.
- Course reader with selected texts.

Course schedule

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<th>Sessions</th>
<th>Topics, Readings, etc.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Session 1</td>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Introduction: Media Politics – Media and Politics; Key Players and Keywords; Course Schedule and Expectations</td>
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<td>In this introductory session, we will familiarize ourselves with concepts and keywords that will play a dominant role in the weeks to come. What is meant by “media” in the context of this course? What kinds of “media politics” are there – is it the sum of policies that determine how media can work, or the state of politics (i.e., media-driven) nowadays? Who is “the media”? And what is expected of you as participant throughout the course?</td>
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<td><strong>Reading:</strong> John Street: Mass Media, Politics and Democracy (2nd ed.), Basingstoke 2011, pp.1-17.</td>
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<td>Session 2</td>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Media Structures in Germany – Print and Broadcasting; the Dual System; “Public Service”; the “Fourth Estate”</td>
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<td>To understand media politics in Germany, we will have to know media history – and vice versa. First, we will look at the development of German media as they are today and ask ourselves how their specific structures came about after the Second World War. Then, we will have a closer look at the peculiarities of the German media system (e.g., the so-called “Dual System” of public and private broadcasting) and their political motivations. Finally, we will analyse the (self-ascribed or societally intended?) role of the media in Germany’s political structure today.</td>
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|            | **Reading:** Hans J. Kleinsteuber: “Germany”, in: Mary Kelly, Gianpietro Mazzoleni and Denis McQuail (eds.): The Media in Europe (3rd ed.), London 2004, pp.78-90; Peter J. Humphreys:
**Session 3**

**Topic:** Institutions and Individuals – Journalists and Media Companies; Convergence and Concentration; Regulation/De-Regulation/Re-Regulation; Legal Framework; Ethics

So far, we have looked at theoretical, historical, political and structural aspects of the German media system. In this session, we will gain knowledge about the economic realities of media companies and the working situation, professional training and self-understanding of journalists. In order to complete the picture of how the media work, we will then turn to the legal frameworks in which media institutions and individuals operate and ask to which ethical guidelines they (should) adhere. One set of questions to be asked is: How political can the media be, and how free from politics can they act?

**Reading:**

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**Session 4**

**Topic:** Public Service Broadcasting – Who cares (and why)??!

Excursion #1: Guided Tour RBB (Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg)

Public Service Broadcasting is an inherently
European phenomenon. But is public broadcasting still necessary today? How hard is the competition from private broadcasting? How can the argument that it provides a “public service” be justified in the days of the Global Village, the Internet and the Information Society in modern, developed countries? We will try and get to the core of these issues and also see our theoretical knowledge gained last session at work on a tour of one of the public service broadcasters’ premises in Berlin.


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<th>Session 5</th>
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<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Freedom of the Press and Political Interference I – Special Protection; Case Study #1: Children’s TV and the State</td>
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With our newly-acquired background on structures and activity frames of German media and media politics, we will start delving into specific issues at their points of interaction. For a start, we will dedicate two sessions to a critical analysis of one of the most touchy subjects between politics and the media: the clash between freedom of the press/freedom of speech and political interference on behalf of certain interest groups. Our first session on freedom of the press and political interference shows that even in modern, liberal societies with strong and legally protected media (such as Germany), there are particular interest groups that enjoy special protection, which entails certain media restrictions. The most strongly protected group is that of children and youngsters, so we will ask where and how politics curb the media’s liberties on their behalf.


Session 6
Midterm Exam

Session 7
Topic: Freedom of the Press and Political Interference II – Watchdogs and Warlords; Case Study #2: Springer and the Students;

Excursion #2: Walking Tour

The "classical" image of Western European media is that of the liberal guardian that fights for the right to know, to publish and to comment on even uncomfortable political truths. In our second session on press freedom and political interference, however, our next case study sets a counterpoint by asking: Are the media always positioned against the State and for the people? What happens when media institutions become openly political, and who guards the guardians? To do so, we will go back in time to the unrest of 1967/68 and follow in the footsteps of Berlin students of the era.


Session 8
Topic: The Kennedy Effect – Media and Political Actors; Media Celebrities in Politics and Politicians as Media Celebrities;
Case Study #3: A Good Image is Worth a Thousand (Stolen) Words

Another field of interaction between politics and the media is the growing presence of the media in political campaigns. Do politicians use the media to their ends, or do the media provide ruthless insights into the candidates' true beliefs and motivations? What does it mean when political candidates not only need to be telegenic, but also well-versed in media use and manipulation these days? Do journalists need to be political scientists to report successfully? Is it all about content or about appearance? In this context, we will also look at the fusion (or confusion) of media and politics that takes place when individuals “change sides” and go from media jobs to political office, or the other way around. Finally, our third case study deals with the plagiarism scandal around Germany's former Secretary of Defence and political media star Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg in 2011.


Session 9

Topic: European Neighbours – Italy and Great Britain;
Case Study #4: “When in Rome, …” – Berlusconi and the Press;
Case Study #5: “Scandal Galore!” – Murdoch and a British Tabloid Excess

INDEPENDENT PROJECT REPORTS DUE

After having scrutinized German media politics, we will turn to two of our European neighbours and their alternative versions of media politics. Our
comparative analysis takes us first to Italy, a country in which the media and politics were often merged into one after Silvio Berlusconi had come into office. Here is an interesting example of a non-separation of media, politics, money and power that helps us understand why other states and governments are so determined in their media policies to avoid this kind of “influence concentration”. Drawing on what we have learned so far, we will ask: What were the parameters that made Berlusconi possible? Could he have succeeded in other countries, too? What would have been (or was) necessary to break his “spell”? The second country we will look at in more detail is Great Britain, the nation that features both the Godmother of all public service broadcasting and at the same time Rupert Murdoch and his omnipotent commercial media empire.


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<th>Session 10</th>
<th>Topic: The Big Picture – A Toolkit for the Analysis of Media Politics</th>
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<td>BRIEF PRESENTATION OF PAPER OUTLINES</td>
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<td>One aim of this course has been to equip its participants with knowledge and helpful tools that will enable them to analyse media politics outside of this course, too. At this point, we will therefore gather all that we have learned so far regarding the structural, contextual, and critical analysis of media/political/media politics phenomena. Guiding questions will include: Where can I turn to find out</td>
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more about the background of specific media and political structures? Which questions should I ask about the relationship and interaction of politics and the media to understand them? Who are the actors I will need to observe? Which theories and models do I have to know? These questions will be answered in close connection to the term paper projects that will be briefly presented and discussed by participants in this session.


Session 11

Topic: New Media – New Politics? Amateurs, Bloggers, Pirates

TERM PAPER DUE

The media not only function as a mirror of political events or a platform for political campaigns, they can also to a large extent shape new forms of political participation. At the same time, journalistic participation also changes through alternative forms of public communication such as blogs, tweets and amateur videos on YouTube or other platforms used by non-traditional (and often non-professional) “reporters”. In this session, we will look at challenges to conventional hegemony over “the news” and to classic methods of generating support and gauging voters’ opinions and wishes. How do new media influence media production and consumption, and do politics have to keep up with changing information-gathering and reception styles of their potential voters? The overarching question gets to the core of a socio-political analysis of the media’s role in democratic societies: Are there benefits to democracy inherent in new media which will enable people to participate in a fuller, more direct, and more “equal” way?


**Session 12**

**Topic:** Media Politics Revisited – A Gentleman’s Agreement or Checks and Balances?

Case Study #6: Bild and the President; Conclusion and Outlook

We will look back and ahead at the end of this course and try to get a sense of the relationship between, and the future of, media and politics in modern Western societies in the 21st century: Are they opponents or accomplices? Do they strive for the same goals or for opposite ones? Is theirs a give-and-take situation or a tug-of-war? Do they critically control each other or secretly manipulate one another? Is there perhaps a middle way in each of these questions? And where do media and politics go in the future?


**Session 13**

**Final Exam**