

NEWSREEL 2

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NEW TEACHING FIELDS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF JOURNALISTS

TEACHING GUIDE

IMPROVING DEMOCRATIC SENSIBILITY



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About the Newsreel Project

An indispensable ability that journalists need to acquire is the creative and responsible use of digital tools. Journalists should be reliable and trustworthy sources of news amidst the digital din as they need to provide a counterpoint to the wealth of unverified information that affects the raw emotions and tempers of audiences around the world. The target audience of the EU-funded NEWSREEL2 - New Teaching Fields for the Next Generation of Journalists project is the millennial and post-millennial generations of journalists whose lifestyles are inherently linked to digital devices and social media. The primary aim of NEWSREEL2 is to improve their digital skills in a creative and responsible way to enhance the societal benefits of the digital era. To achieve these objectives, the NEWSREEL2 project team developed innovative teaching methods and materials for media and journalism students.

The project is the extension of NEWSREEL - New Skills for the Next Generation of Journalists, widening the scope of the original four journalistic fields covered (data journalism, collaborative journalism, new business models and ethical challenges) with nine new ones: (1) 'Storytelling in social media' enables students to learn how to present journalistic contents on social media networks. (2) 'Graphic journalism' helps students to get to know the basic tools and subgenres of comics journalism. (3) Improving students' 'democratic sensibility' enables them to be aware of their social role and responsibility in the democratic society of the digital age. (4) 'Covering migration' helps to improve their research and reporting skills and understanding migration in a global context. (5) 'Foreign coverage' enables students to contribute to a more balanced coverage of international topics. (6) 'Journalism for voice-activated assistants and devices' teaches students how to use them and see their potential in newsrooms. (7) 'AI and journalism, robot journalism and algorithms' teach their usage, and enables students to clearly see the potential benefits and risks. (8) 'Verifying and analyzing fake news' teaches students to be able to identify information and opinion going viral and to verify information with the help of suitable tools and software. (9) 'Debunking disinformation' helps students to get solid knowledge about the mechanisms used for debunking fake news and disinformation. The project aims to facilitate efficient international cooperation between university-based journalistic ecosystems. All educational materials produced by the project partners are open free and accessible through open licenses via the NEWSREEL2 website (<https://newsreel.pt.e.hu/>).

The project partners are the University of Pécs, in Hungary; the Erich Brost Institute, from the Dortmund Technical University, in Germany; the University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE-IUL), in Portugal; the University of Bucharest, in Romania; the

Masaryk University, from Brno, in the Czech Republic; and Hostwriter, from Berlin, in Germany.

The Teaching Guides

There is a teaching guide for each field of the NEWSREEL2 project. The main goal of these teaching guides is to give some hints that can help teachers and trainers to implement the developed courses. The guides help understand how the courses are structured and showcase the complete courses and the e-learning or other teaching materials available for each course on the online platform. Through the guides you can have access to main goals of the course, for whom it was thought, bibliographical references and other contents that can help you get the most out of the contents the NEWSREEL2 team has prepared.

The structure

Besides the detailed syllabus, this course provides e-learning materials developed to support the teaching process. You can find these e-learning materials in the syllabus and in this teaching guide.

The teaching guides structure is the following:

- The professional field
- Target audience
- General objectives
- Specific objectives
- Professional competences to be enhanced
- Course
 - o Complete course
 - Contents according to the Syllabus
 - Advised teaching methods
 - Evaluation suggestion
 - Bibliography suggestions
 - o E- Learning or other teaching materials
- Notes to teachers
- General observations
- The team

Improving Democratic Sensibility



The professional field

Trust in mainstream media continues to decline and often faces attacks from politicians. The aim of this course is to discuss with students how to improve journalists' awareness of their social role and responsibility in a democratic society in the digital age. We focus on the essential notions of democracy, as well as the professional attitudes of journalists towards power and responsibility. Though their democratic role is clear for most journalists and journalism students, the new challenges of potential pressures (e.g., political, economic, public service media, technological innovation) and their ethical solutions make it necessary to focus on improving democratic sensibility in journalism and media education.

Target audience

Students of the 2nd year of bachelor in journalism/media studies.

General objective of the course

Students have an in-depth understanding of the roles of media, journalists and journalism in democracy and the key challenges that they currently face.

Specific objectives of the course

- Understand the reciprocal relationships between media and democracy.
- Evaluate the role of journalism and journalists in a democratic society.
- Critically analyze academic literature on the topic and report the results of the analysis in an academic way.
- Apply normative theories of media to current cases and critique them considering contemporary communication development.
- Know the key concepts and vocabulary of the topic.

Professional competences to be enhanced

- Translate theoretical insights into journalistic practice and vice versa.
- Understand key problems of the media and democracy relationship.
- Understand (English) terminology in the field.
- Skills to conduct critical analysis of the media.
- Skills to review academic literature.
- Skills to plan and produce case studies in the field.
- Essay writing skills.
- Presentation skills.

- Discussion and debate.

COURSE

Contents

Week 1

Structure of the course. Basic terminology. Assignments. Evaluation criteria.

Week 2

Normative theory of journalism in democracy: a) Functions of media in democratic society, b) Independence and plurality of media.

Week 3

Current challenges to the normative theory. a) Political, economic, and technological pressures on media, b) Polarization and fragmentation of media and audiences. Trust in media.

Week 4

Analysis of a current media case in the context of the discussed theories. Presentation of a selected case study. Discussion with a selected professional journalist.

Week 5

Power of the media in democracy: a) Political economy of media, b) Public sphere, public citizenship, public service media, c) Media ownership and media plurality

Week 6

Current challenges to the power of the media in democracy: a) Media ownership/market concentration, b) Commodification and commercialization of media, c) Converged media environment. Social media and journalism.

Week 7

Analysis of a current media case in the context of the discussed theories. Presentation of a selected case study. Discussion with a selected professional journalist.

Week 8

Journalists in democracy: a) Independence and professionalism of journalists, b) Journalistic responsibility and ethics, c) Roles of journalists.

Week 9

Current challenges for journalists in democracy: a) Journalistic professional autonomy. Censorship and self-censorship, b) Power relations of the actors – journalists, owners, advertisers, and politicians. “Non-professional” content providers (citizen journalism). Politicization of the media, c) Journalism as a lifelong project (training, burn-out, insecurity).

Week 10

Analysis of a current media case in the context of the discussed theories. Presentation of a selected case study. Discussion with a selected professional journalist.

Week 11

Proposed individual and organizational solutions of current challenges for media and democracy.

Week 12

Discussion and evaluation.

Teaching methods

E-learning, self-study, presentations in groups, group discussion, discussion with a practitioner.

Evaluation

- **Class participation (5 %)**
 - Knowledge of compulsory reading, ability to answer questions during the lecture or/and discuss topics.
- **Individual assignment – essay (50 %)**
 - Written academic essay (max. 10 pages) focused on one of the topics of the course. Author can get 0 to 50 points.
- **Group assignments – 3 case studies (15 % - 5 % for each)**
 - Written summary (max. 1 page) as a basis for later presentation focused on one of the topics of the seminars. Group of authors can get 0 to 5 points for each summary).
- **Presentation of case studies in groups (30 % - 10 % for each)**
 - Written presentation, presentation (max. 10 minutes), and discussion on the selected topic. Group of authors can get 0 to 10 points for each presentation.

Short Bibliography

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E-Learning contents

You can find the following classes on the e-learning platform:
https://newsreel.pt.e.hu/improving_democratic_sensibility

- Media and journalists in democratic societies
- Power of the media in democratic societies
- The responsibility of journalists in democratic societies: Journalists in democracy
- The responsibility of journalists in democratic societies: Current challenges for journalists in democracy

Notes to the teachers

The course is designed as a combination of independent group work and discussion sessions to introduce students to the challenges that journalists currently face and suggest possible solutions to overcome them.

The aim of the course is to discuss three key topics:

- 1) **The role of the media in a democratic society**, specifically the normative theories of journalism, media independence, and pluralism, and the challenges posed by the fragmentation and polarization of audiences and the political, economic and technological pressures on journalists
- 2) **Media power in a democratic society**, specifically the political economy of the media, the public sphere and the role of public service media and media ownership. And contemporary challenges to power of media in democracy: concentration of ownership, commodification and commercialization of media, and convergent media environment
- 3) **Media accountability in democratic societies**, specifically the independence and professionalism of journalists and media ethics. And contemporary challenges: journalistic integrity and autonomy, power relations between journalists, politicians, advertisers and owners, and relationship with "non-journalistic" content producers

The structure of the course is such that there are always 2 or more sessions devoted to theoretical introduction and key concepts (often in the form of e-learning), followed by a face-to-face discussion combined with the presentation of case studies that students prepare in groups based on e-learning materials and sessions. Their task is to select one case study/event that illustrates the concepts or issues covered in the e-learning and then present this case study to their classmates. As a result, students are expected to make three case study presentations during the course and then submit a written essay on one of the selected cases during the exam period. The attendance sessions also include a discussion with selected journalists who have something to say on the topic.

During the pilot teaching we find it very useful to have students working in teams. On the one hand, they are more motivated and learn teamwork, and on the other hand, they can discuss the topic, which seems very appropriate in this case. Students worked in the course on three case studies for which they chose a medium/media event to illustrate some of the challenges journalists face today. Through this approach, they gained the necessary knowledge and were forced to apply it when thinking about actual events. A whole lesson was always set aside for the presentation of the three case studies so that the topic, both from the theoretical and applied point of view, could be discussed further. The students could then use the topics from the case studies to write their final individual essays. Thus, they were not forced to invent another case study to which they would apply the topics discussed in the course, but only elaborated on the case they had already presented. This approach developed students' theoretical knowledge, but also their ability to reflect critically on the contemporary media scene, and to link the two approaches.

General observations

The aim of the course is to link traditional normative theories about the role of journalism in society with current events and challenges for the contemporary journalistic environment.

We consider it important for future journalists to be able to think about changes in the media environment in relation to traditional ideas about the role of journalism.

Equally, we consider it important to give them the opportunity to think about how to maintain journalistic integrity and autonomy, and to do their work knowing that they are contributing to the quality of democracy in their country.

The team

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