

Global Communication: Navigating Media, Culture, & Influence in a Connected World

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: BCLA 3021

Number of Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: 45

Instructor: xxx

Course Description

This course introduces students to various facets of communication in a globalized world. It explains the dynamics of major media and technology companies and how their actions result in cultural and content colonialism that shapes the news agenda. The course also emphasizes the importance of learning to “read” the media. It encourages the development of critical thinking when analyzing information and delves into the current dynamics of deep fakes and misinformation. Based on the resources and reality of Barcelona, this course aims to demonstrate, through visits to local and national media outlets, interactions with journalists, and visits to international institutions like the European Parliament, how different communication channels operate, from the political sphere and international organizations to international relations outside of public entities. The final part of the course explores two aspects that make Barcelona an ideal place to address the multicultural challenges of a globalized world. On one hand, it examines European identity dynamics and nationalisms through the conflict between Catalonia and Spain. On the other hand, it leverages the multiculturalism that characterizes global cities like Barcelona to explain misunderstandings and how bridges are built between different cultures.

Course Objectives

Through their participation in this course, students will be able to:

- Understand how international information flows work and how cultural and informational colonialism is structured through news agencies, the most influential traditional information channels, new technologies, and the distribution of cultural and entertainment content.
- Develop a critical perspective towards the information they receive from both traditional media and social networks.
- Learn about the mechanisms behind misinformation and analyze how it influences international relations and the development of modern democracies.
- Understand how identity dynamics operate and their importance in international conflicts, using the Catalonia/Spain conflict as a basis, where they are located. They will also examine how this has parallels and reflections in European and global history and confrontations.
- Explore how international organizations such as the European Union function and how democracy is articulated on a large scale, with an emphasis on information flows from local to global levels and vice versa.
- Learn about linguistic and intercultural misunderstandings, and how these misunderstandings can affect international relations, using the everyday challenges of diverse cultures gathered in a cosmopolitan city like Barcelona as a reference.

Methodology

Requirements

Students are expected to attend each class and field study course component, as outlined in the CET Attendance Policy. Active participation is essential in this course. It is essential that students attend classes having read the assigned materials in advance and submit assignments by the agreed deadlines. Students are expected to read an average of 80 pages per week, work in groups, and present to their classmates. All assignments must be submitted via Canvas by the deadline unless otherwise noted.

Experiential Learning & Field Visits

- Visit to the International Section of a Catalan media outlet.
- Visit to an international production company based in Barcelona.

- Visit to an independent cinema in Barcelona.
- Talk with a foreign correspondent.
- Talk with two politicians (a pro-independence Catalan and a pro-Spanish).
- Visit to the European Parliament delegation in Barcelona (or, if possible, a visit to the European Parliament in Brussels).
- Visit to an NGO specializing in intercultural dialogue in a multicultural neighborhood of Barcelona.

Course Prerequisites

None

Required Reading / Materials

Business Models in Communication & New Technologies

Gallego and Gutiérrez, Technology and Competitiveness, Emerald Insight.

Hallin and Mancini, Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Marta Magadán-Díaz and Jesús Rivas-García, Digitization and Business Models in the Spanish Publishing Industry, article in Publishing Research Quarterly.

Nylén and Holmström, Digital Innovation Strategy: A Framework for Diagnosing and Improving Digital Product and Service Innovation, article in Business Horizons by Elsevier, 2015.

Colonialism, Information Flows, & Misinformation

Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, Blur: How to Know What's True in the Age of Information Overload, Bloomsbury, 2010.

Cailin O'Connor and James Owen Weatherall, The Misinformation Age: How False Beliefs Spread, Yale University Press, 2018.

Cass R. Sunstein, Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media, Princeton University Press, 2017.

Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media, Pantheon Books, 1988.

Oliver Boyd-Barrett, Media Imperialism, SAGE Publications, 2015.

Critical Thinking & Decision-Making

Daniel Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011.

Rolf Dobelli, The Art of Thinking Clearly, Sceptre, 2013.

Europe, Catalonia, & Identity

Francis Fukuyama, Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018.

Slavenka Drakulić, They Would Never Hurt a Fly, Penguin Books, 2003.

Timothy Garton Ash, A British and European Vision of Europe, Penguin Books, 2024.

Multiculturalism & Misunderstandings

Erin Meyer, The Culture Map, PublicAffairs, 2014.

Joshua N. Hook et al., Cultural Humility: Engaging Diverse Identities in Therapy, American Psychological Association (APA), 2017.

Richard D. Lewis, When Cultures Collide, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1994.

Terri Morrison and Wayne A. Conaway, Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands: The Bestselling Guide to Doing Business in More Than 60 Countries, Adams Media, 2006 edition.

Statistics & Communication

Cathy O'Neil, Weapons of Math Destruction, Crown Publishing Group, 2016.

Darrell Huff, How to Lie with Statistics, W.W. Norton & Company, 1954.

Grading

Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
Participation in class	30%
Assignments (3 at 5% each)	15%
Quizzes (2 at 5% each)	10%
Presentation	15%
Final paper	15%
Exams	15%
Final grade	100%

Assessment Details

Participation

- It is very important to engage in discussions and ask questions to guest speakers. Participation will be assessed in each class per the rubric.

Assignments

- Three papers of 2-4 pages (two individual papers and one in a group). Topics include information bias in international news, international deepfakes on social media, and a news report on a topic involving all of Europe, using statistics and graphs. To complete these assignments, students must not only apply the learning about searching for and interpreting statistics but also use the Internet as a research tool, distinguish relevant and reliable sources from "noise," and apply the social theories and perspectives explained both in the bibliography and in classroom learning.

Quizzes

- Two short quizzes (to be completed in no more than half an hour). Two or three questions, with responses limited to a maximum of two paragraphs each, to assess comprehension of the readings.

Presentation

- A 3-minute presentation of the student's own participation in the group project, plus a 10-minute presentation for questions to present individual work, using the local context to illustrate concepts learned in class.

Final Paper

- An 8-10 page proposal to improve aspects of international communication studied during the course. (For example, creating tools to give more voice to minorities or underserved localities; a campaign to combat false international news; a campaign to improve communication in a multicultural context or between countries).

Exams

- Two exams that cover the entire course. The first exam will focus on the section related to media imperialism, while the second will cover multiculturalism and identities in international conflicts. In the exams, students will be asked to develop or explain in essays concepts learned in class, through readings, and during visits.

Course Content

Unit 1

Media Imperialism

- Media imperialism in international information flows, through news channels (agencies, influential media outlets).

Unit 2

The Economy of National & International Media Structures

- Money rules. The influence of economic powers on the distribution of information.
- Media imperialism through new technologies.

Unit 3

Imperialism through Culture & Entertainment

- Cultural imperialism through the distribution of the entertainment industry.

Unit 4

Information & Misinformation in the Digital Age

- Introduction. Information biases and critical thinking. Assumptions and prejudices.
- Misinformation and interference in democracies in the era of social media and artificial intelligence.
- Information and misinformation through statistics.

Unit 5

Information Flows, International Organizations, & International Politics

- The functioning of press offices in international organizations and their relationship with politics.
- The ethical code in international reporting. Who takes journalists to the scene (especially in wars)? Where was the journalist? What places did they visit? Did they speak with all sources?

Unit 6

Identity, Culture, Politics, & Peace

- The Catalonia/Spain identity conflict and why Barcelona is the way it is.
- The importance of identities in international conflicts.
- The role of the European Union as the highest international body for maintaining European peace.

Unit 7

Multiculturalism, Cultural Clashes, & Acculturation

- Coexistence, linguistic and cultural misunderstandings for international understanding.
- The role of mediation.

Policies

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).