Course description
The ways in which media are produced and consumed are undergoing fundamental changes. Traditional divisions between the senders and the receivers of media messages are blurred, citizen journalism is complementing the journalist profession, community media are increasingly recognized as a third media sector next to commercial and public service media, and tactical uses of communication and cultural expression are interfering with mainstream media processes and messages. While many such grassroots media practices are created in opposition against established media relations and power structures, a broader range of interactions with 'the mainstream' is visible, from contestation to cooperation and cooptation.

In this course we will analyze activist, alternative, civil society- and community-based media practices within the context of globalization and social change. We will discuss various forms of mediated expression, both 'old' and 'new', as products and instruments of cultural, economic and political struggles, and as part of social dynamics of democratization and citizen participation.

The first part of the course will develop the social and political context of media activism; provide an understanding of theoretical concepts such as hegemony, cultural imperialism, civil society, social movements and social change; and discuss the conceptual variety of alternative and participatory communication. In the second part we will look more closely at specific forms of media activism, from community radio and the radical press to hacktivism and culture jamming. In the third part, finally, we will analyze specific agendas, such as media reform, communication rights, and access to the knowledge commons.

The goal of the course is to develop a thorough understanding of media practices that exist beyond the established media structures, and to explore relations with a variety of broader social dynamics. The course addresses media and communications students who are interested in activist, alternative and citizens media, as well as students from other fields of the social sciences who would like to study participatory media as examples of interventions in the process of social change.
Course format

The course will follow a seminar format. Each session will begin with an introductory presentation by the instructor followed by a discussion of the week's topic. Students will be expected to have done the necessary preparation, according to the schedule presented at the beginning of the course. Each student will present two or three readings during the course of the semester. Some sessions will feature guest speakers.

The course should allow students to develop – and ground – their research interests. Class discussions will relate the specific class topics to those interests. The syllabus allows for some flexibility if students wish to explore some themes more in-depth. The course will end with the presentation of student research papers.

Evaluation

20% Seminar participation
20% Presentations of readings
10% Weekly discussion questions
20% Presentation of final paper
30% Final paper

Seminar participation: Students will regularly attend classes, inform the instructor of any absence in advance, and participate actively in class discussions.

Presentations of readings: Students will give short presentations on class readings, typically 2-3 times during the semester (depending on class size).

Weekly discussion questions: Students will submit one or two questions for discussion prior to each session based on the assigned readings, to be posted on the course website in advance of the class. The questions will demonstrate students' reflections on the readings.

Presentation of final paper: Students will give a 10-15 minute presentation in class about their final paper.

Final paper: A final paper (5,000 words + references) has to be submitted according to department deadlines. The topic will be discussed and agreed with the course instructor. Extensions are only possible in extraordinary circumstances.

***Course packs with all required readings will be available from the McGill Bookstore***

Some sessions include recommended readings. These are not mandatory, but they can help to get a broader perspective on an issue. Students are generally advised to look beyond the specific reading list of each session and draw connections to other texts which they have read outside this course or in addition to class readings.
Timetable and list of readings

Week 1: 'The People Formerly Known as the Audience' – Discussion on Participation in the Media Sphere; Introduction to the Course

Rosen, Jay (2006) 'The People Formerly Known as the Audience', PressThink, http://journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/weblogs/pressthink/2006/06/27/ppl_frmr.html (this text is not included in the reader, please read it online)


Week 2: Media Empires and Hegemony


Recommended:

Week 3: Civil Society, Social Movements and the Multitude


Week 4: Contesting Media Empires: Concepts of Grassroots Media


Hadl, Gabriele, and Dongwon, Jo (2009) 'New Approaches to Our Media: General Challenges and the Korean Case', in Mojca Pajnik and John H.D. Downing (eds) *Alternative Media and The Politics of Resistance. Perspectives and Challenges*, Ljubljana: Mirovni Institut, pp 81-109 (this text is not in the reader, it will be distributed in class)


Week 5: Communication for Social Change and Development

The readings for this week are the following texts from:


Bordenave, Juan Diaz (1977) 'Communication Theory and Rural Development: A Brief Review', pp 133-142

Beltran, Luis Ramiro (1979) 'A Farewell to Aristotle: Horizontal Communication', pp 157-170

Huesca, Robert (1996) 'Naming the World to Theorizing its Relationships: New Directions for Participatory Communication for Development', pp 528-536


Recommended:
Browse through some of the following chapters and excerpts in the Anthology (available at the library):
Boal, Augusto (1974) 'Theater of the Oppressed'
Rogers, Everett (1976) 'Communication and Development: The Passing of the Dominant Paradigm'
Hedebro, Goran (1979) 'Towards a Theory of Communication and Social Change'
Servaes, Jan (1985) 'Communication and Development Paradigms – An Overview'
Ramirez, Mina (1986) 'Communication as if People Matter: The Challenge of Alternative Communication'
Kivikuru, Ullamajia (1993) 'Going Grassroots'
Riano, Pilar (1994) 'Women in Grassroots Communication: Furthering Social Change'
Sreberny-Mohammadi, Annabelle, and Mohammadi, Ali (1994) 'Small Media and Revolutionary Change: A New Model'
Thomas, Pradip (1994) 'Participatory Development Communication: Philosophical Premises'
Huesca, Robert (2003) 'From Modernization to Participation: The Past and Future of Development Communication in Media Studies'

**Week 6: Community Radio – Reclaiming the Airwaves**


*Recommended:*

**Week 7: Alternative Media Histories – From Theatre to Print to Video**

Ouelette, L. (1995) 'Will the revolution be televised? Camcorders, activism, and alternative
television in the 1990s', in P. d'Agostino & D. Tafler (eds) Transmission: Toward a Post-

Week 8: Online Activism and Hacktivism

Bennett, Lance (2003) 'New Media Power: the Internet and Global Activism', in Nick Couldry
and James Curran (eds) Contesting Media Power, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, pp
17-38.
(Chapter 6: 'Hack Attacks and Electronic Civil Disobedience', pp 140-172).
Kidd, Dorothy (2002) 'Indymedia.org: A New Communications Commons', in Martha Mc
Caughey and Michael Dayers (eds) Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and
Practice, New York: Routledge, pp 47-70.
Vegh, Sandor (2002) 'Classifying Forms of Online Activism: The case of Cyberprotests against
the World Bank', in Mc Caughey, Martha, and Dayers, Michael (eds) Cyberactivism:
Online Activism in Theory and Practice, New York: Routledge, pp 71-96.

Recommended:
G. Lovink (eds) Reformating Politics: Information Technology and Global Civil Society,
New York: Routledge.

Week 9: Using the Mainstream, Subverting the Mainstream – Culture Jamming and other
Interactions

Gitlin, Todd (1995) 'The Whole World is Watching', in P. d'Agostino & D. Tafler (eds)
Harold, Christine (2004) 'Pranking Rhetoric: Culture Jamming as Media Activism', Critical
Studies in Media Communication, 21(3), pp. 189-211.
Liacas, Tom (2005) '101 Tricks to Play with the Mainstream: Culture Jamming as Subversive
Recreation', in A. Langlois & F. Dubois (eds) Autonomous Media: Activating Resistance
and Dissent, Montreal: Cumulus Press, pp 61-74.
Gaber, Ivor, and Willson, Alice W. (2005) 'Dying for Diamonds: The Mainstream Media and
NGOs – A Case Study of Action Aid', in Wilma de Jong, Martin Shaw, Neil Stammers
(eds.), Global Activism, Global Media, London: Pluto Press, pp 95-109 (this text is not in
the reader, it will be distributed in class).

Recommended:
Timms, Dave (2005) 'The World Development Movement: Access and Representation of
Globalisation-Activism in the Mainstream Press', in Wilma de Jong, Martin Shaw, Neil
Week 10: Movements for Media Reform and Communication Rights

http://faculty.ischool.syr.edu/mueller/reinventing.pdf (text is not in the reader, please read it online)


Week 12: Policy Frameworks, Policy Interventions and Participation


Week 13: Presentation of Student Research Papers
McGill Policies

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. (Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009).

Additional policies governing academic issues which affect students can be found in the McGill Charter of Students' Rights

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.