

E-Media, A New Face of Social Communication

E-media is a very broad term, which covers a lot of phenomena initiated mainly by the development of digital technologies of communications, especially computer networks (Internet). E-media are synonymous to new media in this course. We won't treat as e-media such modifications of traditional media, like digital television. However, processes of convergence of old and new media (eg. Triple play services available in broadband Internet networks) will be shown and analyzed. The focus is on social, political, economical and cultural changes caused by e-media development. The course will provide theoretical tools to discuss e-media phenomena. These tools will be used in practice during analyses of several case studies from real life of e-media. We will work either on cases being examples of tremendous success, or which finished as sad failures. Students will be invited to apply knowledge obtained during this course to analyze cases of e-media ventures known from their personal practice. The aim of the course is to show, that e-media are an inherent part of postmodern world, a part which importance is quickly growing.

Introduction to e-media. E-media, as technologies of freedom and mass manipulation. Broad historical and social context of e-media development will be given during that seminar. Students will learn about cultural, technological and economical issues, which have paved a way to e-media appearance and its explosive social adoption in late nineties (still lasting). The most important cases and phenomena of e-media development will be shown (to discuss them with details during following seminars).

Understanding media. Basics of theory of social communication (basic definitions of information, communication, communicative action, media of communication, knowledge, public sphere, public discourse) and media of mass communication will be introduced. Students will learn about interactions between media of communication and social organization. A multiplayer, complex game between media, economy, technology, culture, power and institutions will be disclosed.

Differentia specifica. In this seminar, the focus is on constitutive features, which make e-media autonomous part of media environment. We will discuss such important aspects of e-media, like interactivity, lack of central command and control, immediacy, hipertextuality, the role of an interface and ability to cumulate knowledge.

Typology of e-media. In this seminar, students will get known differences between kinds of e-media and learn how to systematize them according to different ordering rules (technology, business model, model of user participation, political involvement). Discussion will be based on an analysis of real cases of e-media (Web 2.0 phenomena, Google, YouTube, etc).

E-media as New Media. Cases of spectacular successes and failures of independent e-media initiatives will be discussed in this seminar. Why only few from a sea of new e-media projects have succeeded? What does consumer really need? Why is it so difficult to predict and develop on rational basis a "killer application", service which customer is ready to die for?

E-media as an extension of old media (msm – mainstream media). An history of old media (press, radio, TV) involvement in digital media adventure will be discussed in this seminar. A phenomenon of a clash of culture between old media and new media environments will be shown, which often leads to spectacular failures of old media in e-media territory. Convergence of old media, new media and telecommunications.

E-media and New Social Movements. E-media as a tool for social criticism will be shown in this seminar. Do e-media create new, alternative public sphere? How are they used to build social mobilization and express voices of minorities (sexual, cultural, national)?

On the borderline. New phenomena of digital culture, like computer games will be discussed in this seminar. They do not strictly belong to media environment, but play an important role in social mobilization, self-organization and strongly influence public discourse showing new ways of building social ties and inspiring social creativity.

E-media and politics. Spectacular cases of political involvement of e-media will be discussed in this seminar, like Zapatista Movement of Mexico, N30 revolt in Seattle, Revolution of Generation 386 in South Korea, Rathergate in the USA, Abu Ghraib scandal.

Economics of e-media. E-media to flourish have to be supported with different means: money, technology, and skilled workers. Is money enough to build successful e-media venture? What about social entrepreneurship and work “just for fun”? Why do people get involved in e-media projects? How to build trust and attract viewer attention? How to survive in a digital network economy, full of paradoxes. On the one hand “winner takes all” rule seems predominate. On the other hand an effect of “long tail”, which promotes small, niche producers is apparent.

The Law and Cyberspace. Legal regulations of e-media environment will be discussed in this seminar. Students will learn about potential dangers awaiting freedom of expression in e-media due to specific features of digital technologies of communications. New initiatives to keep new media environment free from direct and indirect control and censorship will be discussed (Creative Commons, Open Access, Free Software Movement, etc.).

Future of e-media and social communication. In this final seminar potential ways of future development of public sphere and public discourse will be discussed. Is death of old media inevitable? Who will dominate e-media environment: big fish from old establishment or self-organizing citizens? Will further development of e-media improve public discourse or will it lead to the deterioration of public sphere? Are e-media really technologies of freedom?