



Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Spring Semester 2023

4,691: Medien/Media: Data Cultures - Understanding Mediation from Social Media to Artificial Intelligence

ECTS credits: 3

Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)

Decentral - examination paper written at home (individual) (70%)

Examination time: term time

Decentral - Presentation (in groups - all given the same grades) (30%)

Examination time: term time

Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer

[4,691,1.00 Medien/Media: Data Cultures - Understanding Mediation from Social Media to Artificial Intelligence](#) -- Englisch --
[Barassi Veronica](#)

Course information

Course prerequisites

None.

Learning objectives

Upon the successful completion of the course, students will have

- gained a critical understanding of data technologies and their implications
- learned the key issues on the social impacts of social media, from self-branding and content moderation to fake news
- acquired a good understanding of the opportunities and challenges of big data and artificial intelligence
- developed an empirical appreciation of the social impacts and social consequences of data technologies in different areas of social life

Course content

Today, from social media to artificial intelligence, data technologies have come to 'mediate' organizational knowledge from governments to businesses, from the health sector to education. They are powerful media technologies that construct our realities. But how can we really understand this transformation? What are the social, cultural and political implications of our data cultures? In this course our aim is to gain a critical understanding of the ways in which - over the last decade or so - data technologies have come to dominate different aspects of our societies from everyday relationships and business practices, to the ways in which electoral campaigns are fought.

The course will explore the history, economy and everyday practices that define our data cultures from social media to big data and artificial intelligence. By focusing on key questions about data exploitation and content moderation we will debunk the myth of social media as neutral platforms and we will consider how these technologies have transformed our understanding of data privacy and the value of personal data and how their manipulation of data impacts on our democracies. By looking at the rise of big data and artificial intelligence in historical perspective we will also talk about what has changed over the last decades and how data-driven and automated decision making is transforming our societies, from governments and policing to education and health. The final and concluding parts of the course will focus on key issue which are at the centre of the international research agenda such as algorithmic bias, data inequality and the problem of data privacy.

Course structure and indications of the learning and teaching design



Class 1 - The Rise of Web 2.0 and the Value of Personal Data

In this session we will discuss the rise of social media and the Web 2.0 business model that emerged following the economic crisis and dot.com bubble. We will analyze the new technological affordances that social media enabled and we will critically reflect on concepts such as 'participatory culture' and 'platform'

Exercise: Role Play in Teams. "Designing your Platform Business with Privacy in mind".

Class 2 - Big Data and the Datafication of Everything

In this class we will explore the rise of big data by looking at the cultural history of social statistics, and then applying these understandings to the analysis of big data we will engage with critical questions about quantification, 'objectivity' and facts.

Group Exercise: Research Design

Class 3 - AI Innovation between myth and reality

In this class we will look at the difference between general AI and narrow AI. The aim is to question, debunk and understand the myth and cultural discourses intrinsic to AI innovation, and to explore how this myths and cultural understandings are impacting on our society.

Group Exercise: Debate: Will AI save or destroy us?

Class 4 - The Social Media Problem: Echo-Chambers and Fake News

One thing is for sure, social media have radically transformed our relationship to news and events, have created filter bubbles, and enabled the spread of so-called 'fake news'. They have also radically transformed electoral campaigning. This section will discuss these issues by looking into key examples of how personal data is used to manipulate voters and polarize society.

Seminar: Researching Fake News

Class 5 - Data Cultures in Society

From Home technologies to education and health, AI technologies are transforming the ways in which we produce knowledge about individuals, contexts and processes. In this lecture we consider some of the best innovations in our society (e.g. personalized health to home sustainability). Yet we will also ask critical questions about data privacy

Group Exercise: Privacy Game

Class 6 - Data Inequality and the Struggle for AI Ethics

By looking into key debates about data inequality, surveillance and the privacy debate, this class we will explore key questions about algorithmic bias, AI ethics and data justice.

Group Exercise: On Trail

Contextual Studies are considered part of **Contact Learning**; thus, taking part properly implies **regular attendance**, be it online or in the classroom. It is the students' own responsibility to ensure that there is **no timetable clash** between the courses they have chosen. A detailed course outline and all relevant documents will be made available on **Studynet**. -Only the current timetable as published on **Stundenplan online** does apply.

Course literature

See Examination Literature.

Additional course information

Prof. Dr. Veronica **Barassi** is Full Professor in Media and Communication Studies (Ordinaria) in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of St. Gallen, as well as the Chair of Media and Culture in the Institute of Media and Communications Management.



Examination information

Examination sub part/s

1. Examination sub part (1/2)

Examination time and form

Decentral - examination paper written at home (individual) (70%)

Examination time: term time

Remark

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Examination-aid rule

Free aids provision

Basically, students are free to choose aids. Any restrictions are defined by the faculty members in charge of the examination under supplementary aids.

Supplementary aids

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Nature of examination

analog

Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

2. Examination sub part (2/2)

Examination time and form

Decentral - Presentation (in groups - all given the same grades) (30%)

Examination time: term time

Remark

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Examination-aid rule

Free aids provision

Basically, students are free to choose aids. Any restrictions are defined by the faculty members in charge of the examination under supplementary aids.

Supplementary aids

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Nature of examination

analog

Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

Examination content

The Examination will be divided into two parts:

Part 1 - Examination Paper Written at Home (Individual) 70% - Essay (18,000 characters included)



This examination will ask you to critically engage with a specific question or topic of the course. Students can design their own question (provided that it is agreed with the course leader) or they choose from a list of questions that I will provide. To achieve excellence the students will need to apply the theoretical insights learned from the literature to the analysis of specific empirical examples. To achieve excellence the students will need to apply the theoretical insights learned from the literature to the analysis of specific empirical examples. Students are expected to read between 4 to 8 chapters or articles on their specific topic (Please note that the mark is not depending on how many texts you read but how well you critically engage with texts in your essay).

Essay Questions will be provided at the beginning of the course

Part 2 - Group Presentation (all given the same mark) 30%

At the beginning of the semester we will allocate groups. All groups will be required to choose one topic: e.g. datafied health, AI between myth and reality, engage with the key readings and produce a powerpoint presentation to be presented in class in the last two weeks of the semester.

Examination relevant literature

- Barassi (2020) Child Data Citizen: How Tech Companies are Profiling Us from Birth (Introduction and Chapter 2)
- O'Reilly, Tim. 2005. What Is Web 2.0: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software. 1 edition. O'Reilly Media. AND Zuboff, Shoshana. 2019. The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power. 1 edition. New York: Public Affairs. (Introduction or chapter three)
- Boyd, danah, and Kate Crawford. 2012. "Critical Questions for Big Data." *Information, Communication & Society* 15 (5): 662- 79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.678878> . OR Crawford, Kate, and Jason Schultz. 2014. "Big Data and Due Process: Toward a Framework to Redress Predictive Privacy Harms." *Boston College Law Review* 55 (1): 93.
- Broussard, Meredith. 2018. Artificial Unintelligence: How Computers Misunderstand the World. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press. (Introduction) OR Zarkadakis, George. 2015. *In Our Own Image: Will Artificial intelligence Save or Destroy Us?* New York, NY: Rider. (Introduction)
- Gillespie Tarleton (2018) Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation and the hidden Decisions that shape Social Media (Chapter One) Yale University Press. OR Noble, Safiya Umoja. 2018. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. 1st ed. NYU Press. (Introduction)
- Elmer, Greg. 2004. *Profiling Machines: Mapping the Personal Information Economy*. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press. (Introduction or chp 1) OR Cheney-Lippold, John. 2017. *We Are Data: Algorithms and The Making of Our Digital Selves*. NYU Press. (Introduction)
- Marwick A and Lewis R (2017) *Media Manipulation and Disinformation, Report Data and Society* <https://datasociety.net/library/media-manipulation-and-disinfo-online/> OR Introne, Joshua, Irem Gokce Yildirim, Luca Iandoli, Julia DeCook, and Shaima Elzeini. "How People Weave Online Information Into Pseudoknowledge." *Social Media and Society*, (July 2018). doi:10.1177/2056305118785639.
- Bradbury, Alice, and Guy Roberts-Holmes. 2016. "'They Are Children...Not Robots, Not Machines'. The Introduction of Reception Baseline Assessment." London: UCL Institute of Education. http://www.betterwithoutbaseline.org.uk/uploads/2/0/3/8/20381265/baseline_assessment_2.2.16-_10404.pdf. OR Russell, N. Cameron, Joel R. Reidenberg, Elizabeth Martin, and Thomas Norton. 2018. "Transparency and the Marketplace for Student Data." SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 3191436. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network. <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3191436>.
- Barassi, Veronica. 2017. *BabyVeillance? Expecting Parents, Online Surveillance and the Cultural Specificity of Pregnancy Apps*. *Social Media + Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117707188> OR Libert, Timothy. 2015. "Privacy Implications of Health Information Seeking on the Web." *Communications of the ACM* 58, no. 3: 68-77. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2658983>.
- Metcalfe, Philippa, and Lina Dencik. 2019. "The Politics of Big Borders: Data (in)Justice and the Governance of Refugees." *First Monday* 24 (4). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v24i4.9934>. OR Richardson, Rashida, Jason Schultz, and Kate Crawford. 2019. "Dirty Data, Bad Predictions: How Civil Rights Violations Impact Police Data, Predictive Policing Systems, and Justice." SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 3333423. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network. <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3333423> .
- Nissenbaum, Helen. 2010. *Privacy in Context: Technology, Policy, and the Integrity of Social Life*. Stanford University Press. OR Barassi 2019. "Datafied Citizens in the Age of Coerced Digital Participation." *Sociological Research Online*, June. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1360780419857734> .
- Eubanks, Virginia. 2018. *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor*. St. Martin's Press. (Introduction) OR Madden, Mary, Michele Gilman, Karen Levy, and Alice Marwick. 2017. "Privacy, Poverty, and Big Data: A Matrix of Vulnerabilities for Poor Americans." *Washington University Law Review* 95 (1): 053-125.



Please note

Please note that only this fact sheet and the examination schedule published at the time of bidding are binding and takes precedence over other information, such as information on StudyNet (Canvas), on lecturers' websites and information in lectures etc.

Any references and links to third-party content within the fact sheet are only of a supplementary, informative nature and lie outside the area of responsibility of the University of St.Gallen.

Documents and materials are only relevant for central examinations if they are available by the end of the lecture period (CW21) at the latest. In the case of centrally organised mid-term examinations, the documents and materials up to CW 12 are relevant for testing.

Binding nature of the fact sheets:

- Course information as well as examination date (organised centrally/decentrally) and form of examination: from bidding start in CW 04 (Thursday, 26 January 2023);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for decentralised examinations: in CW 12 (Monday, 20 March 2023);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised mid-term examinations: in CW 12 (Monday, 20 March 2023);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised examinations: two weeks before the end of the de-registration period in CW 15 (Monday, 10 April 2023).