

Course Outline KULIS

Course title	Public Sphere Theory
Date/duration	Winter Semester 2021/22
Lecturer	Lukas Kaelin
Teaching language	English
ECTS	3 ECTS
Contents	
<p>A realm, where people can meet, discuss and form their opinions on matters of general interest, is an integral part of modern democracy. This is the public sphere. Without such a meeting ground, modern democracy would be void of its very essence. The public sphere is a precarious realm in danger of being colonized by powerful state or economic interest. In modern mass democracies, the forms of public discussion, public opinion and the entire infrastructure of the public sphere become increasingly complex.</p> <p>The public sphere is dependent on a range of social, political, economic, and media conditions. That is why philosophers from John Dewey to Jürgen Habermas and Chantal Mouffe among others have conceived the public sphere in terms of its continuous transformation. In the last decades, we have witnessed rapid media developments and changes in the communicative infrastructure. Mobile technology, the internet and especially the social media have enabled new ways of political communication and yet again transformed the public sphere.</p> <p>This course aims to reflect about the public sphere in view of recent media transformation. For this purpose, three main public sphere theories will be discussed: A pragmatic one (Dewey), one based on communicative rationality (Habermas), and one from a socialist perspective (Mouffe). These theories are confronted with challenges posed to public deliberation by the media transformation as discussed by Ethan Zuckerman, Cass Sunstein and Eli Pariser.</p>	
Learning outcomes	
<p>The objectives of this course are (1) to understand the function of the public sphere for contemporary democracy (theory), (2) to get to know the different public sphere theories in 20th century philosophy, and (3) to reflect on the contemporary media changes and their impact on the public sphere.</p>	
Teaching and learning methods	

The seminar will discuss important texts of public sphere theory. The meetings will be started with a short input on the context of the respective theory followed by a general discussion of the selected readings. Students are required to read the texts beforehand and write a number of short essays during the course of the semester.

Course preparation

Prior to the beginning of the course, no preparation is required. During the course, students are required to read the assigned reading and write essays on these readings.

Literature/ Selected Bibliography

Dean, Jody: Why the Net is not a Public Sphere, *Constellations* 10 (1), 2003, p. 95-112.

Dewey, John: *The Public and Its Problems*, Swallow Press, 1954.

Fraser, Nancy: Transnationalizing the Public Sphere: On the Legitimacy and Efficacy of Public Opinion in a Post-Westphalian World, *Theory Culture Society*, 24:7, 2007, p. 7-30.

Habermas, Jürgen: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, MIT Press, 1991.

Habermas, Jürgen: *Between Norms and Facts*, Polity Press, 1997.

Herman, Edward and Chomsky, Noam: *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, New York: Random House (Pantheon) 2002.

Lippmann, Walter: *Public Opinion*, BN Publishing, 2010.

Mouffe, Chantal: *On the Political*, London/New York: Routledge, 2005.

Mouffe, Chantal: *The Democratic Paradox*, London: Verso, 2000.

Pariser, Eli: *The Filter Bubble*, Penguin, 2012.

Sunstein, Cass: *Republic.com 2.0*, Princeton University Press, 2009.

Zuckerman, Ethan: *Rewire: Digital Cosmopolitan in the Age of Connection*, Norton & Company, 2013.

Assessment (%)

(methods of examination, requirements for awarding credit points)

75% Essays

25% Oral Exam

Contact details (lecturer)

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