



Fachbereich 9 - Medienstudiengänge

Department 9 - Media Courses

Kommentar zur Lehrveranstaltung im SoSe 2026

Description of seminars

Veranstalter*in: Prof. Dr. Stephanie Geise & Prof. Dr. Cornelius Puschmann

Lecturer:

Titel (dt.):

Titel (engl.):

News that matter? Attention, participation, and polarization in digital news environments

Beschreibung:

Description:

This two-semester research seminar examines the evolving role of news in democratic societies, focusing on how digital and increasingly multimodal information environments shape attention, agency, and political participation. As news has shifted from analog mass media to complex digital and platform-based ecosystems, opportunities for civic engagement have expanded—but so have risks such as the fragmentation of shared information spaces, increasing polarization, and changing patterns of news exposure. These developments include phenomena such as “echo chambers” and “filter bubbles” as well as highly selective—and in some cases avoidant—forms of news consumption. The growing integration of artificial intelligence into information production, distribution, and consumption further intensifies these long-standing tensions.

Drawing on interdisciplinary research in communication studies, political communication, and digital media research, the seminar explores the relationship between news use, attention, and democratic participation in contemporary information environments. A central analytical perspective is the persistent tension between the democratic potential of participatory and multimodal news environments and the fragmentation of shared information spaces, alongside shifting patterns of attention, selective exposure, and news engagement. Empirical insights from existing research projects on multimodal news reception and political participation, as well as longitudinal panel studies, will serve as important points of reference.

The seminar is designed as a research-oriented learning environment in which participants develop and conduct their own empirical research projects or work with existing datasets.

First Semester (Winter Semester, Prof. Geise): Theory, Literature Review, and Research Design

The first semester focuses on theoretical foundations and the development of research projects. Students will engage with key literature on digital news environments, multimodality, attention and information processing, participation, polarization, and emerging forms of AI-mediated news production and distribution. Building on this systematic literature review, participants will identify research gaps, formulate research questions, and develop appropriate empirical research designs. Students may choose to design and implement their own empirical studies (e.g., surveys, experiments, content analyses, or mixed-method approaches) or conduct secondary analyses using existing datasets, such as longitudinal panel studies (e.g., the Weizenbaum Panel, Poltrack, Reuters Digital News Report, or comparable datasets on news use and political participation).

Summer Period: Data Collection or Data Preparation (Prof. Geise & Prof. Puschmann)

During the summer break, students will carry out the empirical phase of their projects. Depending on the research design, this may involve collecting original data (e.g., surveys or experiments) or preparing and structuring existing datasets for secondary analysis.

Second Semester (Winter Semester, Prof. Puschmann): Data Analysis and Research Reporting

The second semester focuses on data analysis, interpretation of results, and the preparation of a final research report or academic paper. Students will present and discuss their progress and findings in the

seminar and receive feedback on their analyses and writing. The seminar concludes with the completion of a research report suitable for further development into a conference paper or academic publication. Overall, the seminar provides participants with the opportunity to engage deeply with current debates about the role of news in democratic societies while gaining practical experience in designing and conducting independent empirical research on news attention, participation, and polarization in contemporary digital media environments.

Literatur:

Literature: