

## Fachbereich 9 - Medienstudiengänge

Department 9 - Media Courses

### Kommentar zur Lehrveranstaltung im SoSe 2026

Description of seminars

**Veranstalter\*in:** Prof. Dr. Andreas Hepp

Lecturer:

**Titel (dt.):**

**Titel (engl.):** DMS / MPE D.2-3 Research Seminar: Competing digital futures: Approaching  
(immer communicative AI in a global context  
angeben)

#### **Beschreibung:**

*Description:*

You've probably used ChatGPT, Gemini, or Claude this week. But have you thought about who decides how these tools work—and what kind of future they're building? AI is not just reshaping how we communicate: it is reorganizing journalism, politics, healthcare, and education. And the people designing these systems are also imagining very specific futures—futures that are contested, unequal, and deeply political.

In this research seminar, we take these contested digital futures seriously. We examine communicative AI not as a neutral technology but as a social phenomenon shaped by visions, power, and culture. From the hyper-optimistic AI narratives in Silicon Valley to the perspectives of data workers in the Global South, from the embrace of AI in parts of Asia to critical movements in Europe—the futures being imagined for AI are radically different. And those differences matter. They shape what gets built, who benefits, and what kinds of societies we end up living in.

#### What makes this seminar special

One of the defining features of this seminar is the international diversity of our two MA programs. With students from across Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas, and beyond, we collectively hold a genuinely global perspective on communicative AI—something no single research team could replicate alone. This seminar is built around that diversity: your backgrounds, your languages, your media environments, and your lived experiences with AI are not just welcome here—they are the research material.

You will work in small international research groups, designing and conducting your own empirical study on a topic of your choice. Possible research directions include:

- How is AI talked about in public discourse in different parts of the world, and what futures does that discourse imagine?
- How do tech-related movements and pioneer communities engage with AI visions?
- What do films and popular culture tell us about how AI futures are being imagined?
- How are AI-related futures being shaped in startups and media organizations?
- Or: Your own idea, emerging from your interests and regional expertise.

#### Field trip: re:publica Berlin (18–20 May 2026)

As part of this seminar, participants will travel to re:publica in Berlin—one of Europe's largest and most vibrant conferences on digital culture, society, and the future of the internet. This is a rare opportunity to encounter leading thinkers, activists, journalists, and practitioners working at the intersection of AI, media, and society, and to bring your emerging research into dialogue with cutting-edge debates happening outside the academy.

## What you will gain

By the end of this two-semester seminar, you will have:

- Designed and conducted an original empirical research project from question to publication-ready report—a portfolio piece for your academic and professional future.
- Gained hands-on experience with research methods applicable in academia, journalism, policy, and NGO work, including scenario research and creative futures methodologies.
- Developed the ability to critically evaluate AI-related claims and futures narratives—an essential skill for any media or communications professional.
- Practiced collaborative, international research—working across different cultural contexts and knowledge traditions.
- Engaged with the ethics of research and the responsibilities that come with studying human communication.
- Deepened your understanding of how communication itself is being transformed by AI.

## Module examination

This seminar runs across two semesters. At the end of the second semester (winter semester 2026/27), each participant co-authors a research report of approximately 20-40 pages per person. This is real research—not just an exercise. The report draws on original data you have collected and analyzed together as a group, grounded in the state of the art that you will develop collectively in the first phase.

Throughout the seminar, you will actively contribute through:

- Active participation and collaborative group work in sessions,
- Short progress presentations to the group,
- One formal presentation (literature review or methods),
- Reading and engaging with core texts,
- Data collection and analysis as part of your research group.

## Literatur:

### *Literature:*

- Bareis, J. (2026). Ask me anything! How chatgpt got hyped into being. *International Journal of Communication*, 20, 285-311. <https://doi.org/10.65476/gm817j57>
- Coeckelbergh, M. (2026). Technofascism: AI, Big Tech, and the new authoritarianism. *AI & SOCIETY*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-026-02862-9>
- Hepp, A. (2025). Approaching digital futures: Why media and communication research needs to move from a perspective of consequence to one of emergence. *Communication Theory*. <https://doi.org/10.26092/elib/4974>
- Pollio, A. (2026). *Silicon Elsewhere*. Oakland: University of California Press.