

Module	Media Sociology
Course code	BACH-MS
Credits	5
Important Notes	Available to students with a background in media, political science, and/or sociology.
Allocation of marks	60% continuous assessment 40% final examination

Module aims and objectives

The module aims to instil in learners an understanding of how a sociological perspective of the media reveals the media's role in human socialisation, and its influence on crafting, as well as reflecting, the values of our society. Learners are taught to use the analytical tools of 'agency' and 'structure' to focus on their industry in a critical and evaluative manner, viewing media as one, among many, institutions in society.

Minimum intended module learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module, the learner will be able to:

- (i) Analyse and critique the media from a sociological perspective.
- (ii) Demonstrate a critical understanding of the structure of the media institution, while applying an advanced understanding of the interrelationship of media with governmental, political and economic forces in society.
- (iii) Bring sociological research on the media to a research topic which they initiate, evaluate the research and draw reasonable conclusions from same.
- (iv) Pursue further study and research in media/communications and/or related humanities based disciplines.

Module content, organisation and structure

The 12-weeks of lectures are delivered over 13 weeks, with lectures and tutorials every week covering new topics, reviewing what learners have learned, and actively discussing learners' assignment progress. The following topics are covered:

Topic 1: Introduction to Sociology of the Media: agency, structure, institution; the relationship between media and society, and between society and the media; overview of the critical political economy perspective of communications with examples.

Topic 2: Critiquing Public Service Media Provision: 'the truth will triumph in the free marketplace of ideas' or will it?; classic liberal theory of a free press; Habermassian concept of the 'Public Sphere'; function and impact of public service media provision.

Topic 3: Feminist Perspectives of Media Sociology: overview of contemporary gender inequality; outlining feminism; can persistent sexism in society be partly explained by sexist media content; looking sociologically - is provision of media products with less sexism now, an example of changing social values changing media?

Topic 4: Sociological Critique of Irish News Media: Exploring a range of content and discourse analysis of Irish news media on topics such as the annual budget, austerity, climate change, housing, protesting, privatisation, public services and water charges.

Topic 5: What is Agenda-Setting? McCombs and Shaw's seminal study, the agenda-setting function of the mass media; subsequent academic developments in the field; agenda-setting research from around the world.

Topic 6: Who Sets the Media Agenda? Which people, organisations and processes decide what is on today's media agenda?; the economic, political and cultural forces that determine what that agenda is and how it is formed; how does the production process function from a sociological perspective?

Topic 7: Pluralism V's Concentration: exploring on the one hand media pluralism and media diversity, and on the other, media mergers, acquisitions and concentration; critiquing Irish and EU success in implementing stated governmental intentions of pluralist media structures.

Topic 8: Media Effects Research: enthralled, immersed, enmeshed - contextualising media effects research; evidence of the impact of media on our lives; the measurable effects that media consumption has on peoples' understanding of the world around them; case studies exploring (for example) body image, crime, civil liberties, politicians, suicide and war.