The Social Impact of Communication Technologies

Elena Esposito: 10 hours

The module deals with communication technologies, understood as the various tools that over the course of social evolution have transformed the forms and scope of communication - from handwriting to the mass media and recent forms of communication using algorithms. An extensive literature has addressed the social impact of these tools, which goes far beyond the use of different codes and the possibility of reaching interlocutors who are distant in space and time and possibly unknown. Based on selected texts, the discussion during the meetings will focus on the socio-historical development of the difference between fact, fake and fiction – form early modernity to the recent debate about deepfakes.

The module is intensively discussion-based. Participants are expected to read the readings for each meeting in advance and prepare two questions for discussion, which will be presented at the opening of the session. A brief presentation of the reading by one of the participants is highly recommended.

- Orality and Literacy - 2 hours – February 27

Required reading:
Walter J. Ong (2005). *Orality and Literacy. The Technologizing of the Word*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, Ch. 1 and 3.

- The Origins of Fiction- 2 hours – March 13

Required reading:
Catherine Gallagher (2006). The Rise of Fictionality, in Franco Moretti (ed.), *The Novel*, Volume 1. Princeton University Press: 336-363.

- Fake News - 2 hours – March 20

Required reading:
Andie Tucher (2022). *Not Exactly Lying. Fake News and Fake Journalism in American History*. Columbia University Press. Pp. 1-8; 54-72; 277-290.

- Deep Fakes - 2 hours – March 27

Required reading:
Burkell, J., & Gosse, C. (2019). Nothing new here: Emphasizing the social and cultural context of deepfakes. *First Monday*, *24*(12). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v24i12.10287

- Disinformation - 2 hours – April 3

Required reading:
Barman, D., Guo, Z. & Conlan, O. (2024). The Dark Side of Language Models: Exploring the Potential of LLMs in Multimedia Disinformation Generation and Dissemination. *Machine Learning with Applications* 16.