INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISM AND SOCIETY – THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN THE MODERN WORLD (IR245)

**Course duration:** 54 hours lecture and class time (Over three weeks)

**Summer School Programme Area:** International Relations, Government and Society

**LSE Teaching Department:** Department of Media and Communications

**Lead Faculty:** Professor Charlie Beckett and Dr Shani Orgad (Dept. of Media & Communications)

**Pre-requisites:** An interest in contemporary journalism and international politics and fluent understanding of written and spoken English. There is more information on this in the course content.

**Course Outline:**

This course is a unique opportunity to benefit from the LSE’s outstanding research into modern journalism combined with talks by pioneering media professionals. It is taught by leading academics, including Professor Charlie Beckett who was an award-winning senior journalist with the BBC and who runs the LSE’s international journalism think-tank, Polis. Every day there will be a lecture by a senior academic who teaches the LSE’s post-graduate media and communications courses. There will also be a daily guest talk by a leading media practitioner giving you insights into contemporary cutting edge news media. The seminars will encourage you to think and act like a journalist facing all the dramatic ethical and technological challenges of reporting the complex and dangerous world we live in.

We live in a world where information is an increasingly critical resource. The news media play a crucial role in the production and dissemination of that information. From Twitter to the New York Times, from Al Jazeera to Facebook, journalism is having an impact on our personal and political lives, and so it is vital to understand their role in the modern world. Recent events such as the election of President Trump and the UK EU referendum and the debate over ‘fake news’ has put the news media centre stage in national and international affairs.

Participants in this course will emerge with a better understanding of the shifts taking place in the practices, forms and processes within the news media and their consequences for the role of journalism in contemporary society. They will also gain exciting new journalism skills through a special ‘constructive’ news workshop.
Key Texts:

Other Sources:
- POLIS Director’s Commentary blog: [http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/)
- POLIS Director on Twitter: @charliebeckett

Course Structure:
- Lectures: 36 hours
- Classes: 18 hours

Formative Assessment

This essay will not count towards the final overall grade, but is in place to give students a better idea of what is expected of them in advance of their first summative assessment.

*Format*: Essay of 1500 words
*Date*: Monday June 25th
*Feedback/results due*: Wednesday June 27th

Summative Assessments

The precise time and location of the final examination will be circulated during the programme.

*Format and weighting*: Essay of 1500 words (worth 25% of overall final grade)
*Date*: Friday June 29th
*Results due*: Monday July 2nd

*Format and weighting*: Two hour final examination (worth 75% of overall final grade)
*Date*: Friday July 6th
*Results due*: Within a week of the exam
Monday June 18th

1. Introductory lecture: the media landscape (Charlie Beckett)
This lecture will set out the structure and key concepts of the course. It will explain the context of current media business models and practice. Journalism is viewed here from the perspective of audiences as well as producers, publics as well as politicians. In the digital era media change opens up possibilities for political and editorial innovation, but in reality what are the effects on society?

Required Reading:

Additional Readings:

Section One: What Is Journalism Today?

Tuesday June 19th

2. What Is Journalism? (Charlie Beckett)
What are the different ways that we can describe what a journalist is and what a journalist does? What is the historical context for modern news media? How do we understand the meaning of ‘news’ in a world where technology is changing the way it is produced, distributed and consumed? What are the different social, economic and cultural roles that journalism plays?

Required Reading:

Additional readings:

Wednesday June 20th

3. Networked Journalism (Charlie Beckett)
How does journalism change as it becomes more participatory, interactive, and multi-dimensional? What new ethical challenges and opportunities are there for more democratic or cosmopolitan communication in a networked news environment? The practice and platforms of journalism are being
transformed but in what ways? And what is the impact on journalism role in society and its relationship with the citizen?

Required reading:

Additional readings:

Thursday June 21st
4. Media and Democracy (Charlie Beckett)
This lecture will look at the role of media and democracy. In a liberal democracy what is the function of the news media? How has political journalism changed in the digital age? What difference have blogs, YouTube and Twitter made to the way that politicians communicate and the way that they are reported? Has the citizen become more powerful thanks to social media?

Required Reading:

Additional Readings:

Friday June 22nd
5. Disruptive News in the Networked Era (Charlie Beckett)
This lecture will look at the significance of WikiLeaks and Ed Snowden as a challenge to mainstream politics and to mainstream media. It will ask what is new about WikiLeaks and Snowden and whether they represent a sustainable model for radical journalism. It will also set WikiLeaks and Snowden in the context of wider changes in political communications, especially activists exploiting networks such as the Internet.

Required Reading:

Additional Readings:
- Benkler, Y (2010) A Free irresponsible press: WikiLeaks and the battle over the soul of the networked fourth estate
Available here:
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/30/magazine/30Wikileaks-t.html?_r=1

Section Two: Ethical Challenges to Journalism

Monday June 25th
6. Truth, Trust and Technology (Charlie Beckett)
How should journalism adapt to deal with the crisis in public information? How can the news media counter ‘fake news’, misinformation and partisan propaganda? What is the role of the platforms such as Facebook in improving public information and debate? How can political communications counter the trend towards populism and disinformation? How can citizens become more media literate and break out of filter bubbles and echo chambers?

Required Reading:
Introduction to the LSE Truth, Trust and Technology Commission:
http://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/truth-trust-and-technology-commission
Ball, J, (2017) Post-Truth, Biteback Publishing (Chapter One)

Tuesday June 26th:
7. Reporting Terror (Charlie Beckett)
What are the responsibilities of the news media when reporting on terror events and ideologies of extreme violence? Why do some incidents get more attention than others? What language should journalists use to describe these incidents and what effect does the coverage have upon the politics of identity and race? What role does social media and the platforms like Facebook play?

Required Reading:
  Accessible here: http://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/coverage-terrorism_social_media.php

Wednesday June 27th
8. Newsrooms perspective on Suffering (Charlie Beckett)
The lecture will take a critical approach to claims on journalism regarding its ability to promote cosmopolitan agency. It will look at the role of formula in editorial production, the significance of human interest and the role of the cycle of sensitivity in journalistic reflection. What is the potential of networked journalism to overcome limits of time and distance and to foster interest and action about distant suffering?
Required readings:

Additional Readings:

Thursday June 28th
9. Social media & politics: Post-truth or pre-lie *(Omar Al-Ghazzi)*
The lecture argues that the Arab world is a productive context to consider the differences between narratives about digital media’s impact on politics versus the practices of how people actually use them. It explores how narratives about social media’s political influence over the Arab world fluctuate between fostering democratic activism to enabling terrorism. The lecture then moves to thinking about how authoritarian governments, with the Syrian regime as example, has deployed a strategy to favourably frame digital media content about the war happening in the country. It concludes with reflecting on what lessons can we that is also relevant to journalism/ fake news/ populism/ political fragmentation.

Key readings:

Friday June 29th
10. Giving voice but not listening? Foreign correspondents and conflict zones *(Omar Al-Ghazzi)*
This lecture will explore the cultures and practices of foreign correspondents. It will consider how war journalists construct news narratives about violent conflicts and the people caught up in them. The lecture will examine the burdens and responsibilities that fall on the shoulders of journalists when they purport to represent incidents of violence and human rights abuses in conflict situations. It will introduce various aspects that influence the reporting of war in various global contexts, whether pertaining to technology, political economy, ethics and geopolitics. Importantly, it will address the basic question about what are the stakes of war reporting, particularly in relation to its impact on those victimised by war.

Required reading:
Section Three: The future of journalism

Monday July 2nd
11. What happens to news when it gets emotional? (Charlie Beckett)
This lecture looks at the increasing role of emotions in news. It examines the way that journalists are abandoning classic ideas of objectivity. How does social media create more personalised news consumption? Does this lead to the creation of filter bubbles where we only consume news that we like? Does this mean we are now living in a post-truth era? What impact does it have on our politics and personal lives?

Required Reading:

Tuesday July 3rd
12. Constructive Journalism – lecture and workshop (Charlie Beckett)
This is a special day where we bring in a guest lecturer to talk about the idea of ‘constructive journalism’. Does news have to be so negative and destructive? Does a relentless diet of shocking and upsetting news cause psychological damage? Is it possible to create journalism that includes positive aspects and even suggests solutions to problems? On this day you will learn the skills to create more constructive journalism narratives by framing issues differently and by telling stories in new ways.

Required Reading:
Credit Transfer: If you are hoping to earn credit by taking this course, please ensure that you confirm it is eligible for credit transfer well in advance of the start date. Please discuss this directly with your home institution or Study Abroad Advisor.

As a guide, our LSE Summer School courses are typically eligible for three or four credits within the US system and 7.5 ECTS in Europe. Different institutions and countries can, and will, vary. You will receive a digital transcript and a printed certificate following your successful completion of the course in order to make arrangements for transfer of credit.

If you have any queries, please direct them to summer.school@lse.ac.uk