Universidad de Navarra

History of Communication

Teaching guide 2026-27

INTRODUCTION

The course on the history of communication explores the evolution of the media throughout history from a double perspective: the impact of communication on society, and the relationship between media and the political, economic, and social dynamics of each period in history.

With that aim, we will examine the role of communication from ancient societies to the contemporary world, paying special attention to its development since the invention of the printing press in the 15th century. Therefore, we will focus on the path toward the gradual emergence of a free press in the Western world and on the emergence of new mass communication media (cinema, radio, and television) in the context of the consumer society that developed at the turn of the 20th century. The course will end with a discussion of the relationship between the media and Western political systems, before delving into the development of television.

- **Degree**: Screen Studies.
- **Module in the degree**:
  - Global Journalism - Module 1: Fundamentals of communication and journalism; Subject 2: History of communication.
  - Screen Studies - Module 1: Fundamentals of communication; Subject 2: History and criticism
- **ECTS**: 6.
- **Year, semester**: 1st year, Autumn semester.
- **Type**: Required.
- **Instructor**: Jose Manuel Ferrary, Ph. D.
- **Language**: English.
- **Lecture schedule:** Mondays and Thursdays, 8:00 - 9:45
- **Room**: 13, School of communication

The final exam will take place on December 14th, at 9 a.m. in Classroom 1.

LEARNING OUTCOMES (Competencies)

GLOBAL JOURNALISM

KNOWLEDGE

- **RA5** To know the main shaping elements of today's society, specifically those social, political and economic issues related to current affairs.
- **RA6** Define and understand the historical evolution of contemporary Spanish, European and international journalistic modalities and traditions, as well as the theories, concepts and currents that study them.

SKILLS

- **RA11** That students know how to apply their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional manner and possess the competences that are usually demonstrated through the development and defence of arguments and problem solving within their field of study.
- **RA15** Express oneself fluently and effectively both orally and in writing, making use of the most appropriate linguistic and literary resources.

COMPETENCIES

- **RA22** Students have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues.

- **RA24** Understand, analyse and critically evaluate the elements that shape human beings and present-day society in their multiple dimensions: anthropological, historical, cultural, political, social and economic.
- **RA27** Interpreting and assessing the historical evolution of the recent world and understanding its political, economic, social and cultural parameters that have an impact on the good work of a communicator.

SCREEN STUDIES

KNOWLEDGE

- **RA2** Know and assess the impact of audiovisual communication in its multiple dimensions: social, cultural, historical, economic, business, legal, scientific, technological and deontological.
- **RA6** Knowing the history of communication and the mainstays of audiovisual content.

SKILLS

- **RA10** That students know how to apply their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional manner and possess the competences that are usually demonstrated through the development and defence of arguments and problem solving within their field of study.
- **RA12** Express knowledge and ideas correctly both orally and in writing.

COMPETENCIES

- **RA19** Students have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues.

OBJECTIVES

- By the end of the course students will be able to: Identify the key stages of Communication history
- Identify the most important milestones and historical players of Communication history
- Understand the dependency of today’s communication environment and the evolution of the previous five hundred years

COURSE POLICIES

Absences and lateness

For the proper development of the course, punctuality is essential. Despite this year’s challenging timetable, we will all need to make an effort to respect the established schedule.

Participation

Participation is an essential and mandatory component of this course. You are expected to (1) contribute meaningfully to class discussions, and (2) critically reflect on concepts and articles we encounter. Turning any class from a 'dry' lecture into an exciting, but insightful seminar requires the collective and interactive participation of each student. Thus, the quality of your learning experience is determined by a lively and polite exchange of thoughts and criticisms.

Your grade will be based on the quantity and quality of your participation, as well as your attendance.

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While attendance at the lectures is not strictly mandatory, it is crucial to earning a high participation grade.

Below are the defined criteria for different qualities of comments.

Your grade will be based on the quantity and quality of your participation, as well as your attendance. It should be evident that attending class is crucial to earning a high participation grade. Below are the defined criteria for different qualities of comments. Comment Quality:

- "High": Comments show reflection about the reading or the discussion at hand, contribution through strong points and/or adding value to the discussion by stating their opinion based on factual knowledge.
- "Satisfying": Comments show engagement in class discussion, willingness to "take a guess", and ability to link previous lecture material to discussions at hand, as well as expressing opinions.
- "Low": Comments show engagement in class discussion, but the student never contributes to the added value or demonstrates knowledge from the readings – they are just working for that tick mark.

Classroom policies

Use of laptops & other electronic devices

All class material is provided electronically, so extensive use of laptops for note taking is not necessary and can be done by hand. Therefore, **the use of any electronic device during class is strictly prohibited and will only be allowed under special circumstances**. If you need to use an electronic device for medical reasons, please let me know. Lastly, smart/cell phones should be set to silent, not vibrate.

PROGRAM

1. Introduction

- a. Presentation of the course structure and assessment
- b. Defining the history of communication.

2. Communication before the press era

- a. The Ancient World
- b. The Middle Ages

3. The press, ideologies and political revolutions

- a. The printing press: emergence and social impact
- b. The birth of newspapers
- c. How the press influenced revolutions, and how revolutions strengthened the press

4. The commercial and industrial media revolution (early XIX century)

- a. Newspapers in the Contemporary World
- b. News agencies
- c. Advertising

5. Information during the democratization era (1870-1914)

- a. Photography
- b. Posters and images
- c. Modern advertising
- d. Ideological journalism
- e. The new mass-circulation press: Pulitzer, Hearst, Millaud, and Lord Northcliffe

6. The traditional media in crisis

- a. The interwar period
- b. The birth of cinema
- c. The Great War
- d. The birth of radio
- e. Newspapers in the 1920s and 1930s
- f. Authoritarian and totalitarian regimes
- g. Propaganda in World War II

7. The television era (1945-2000)

- a. The spread of television networks
- b. Contemporary advertising

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

I. CLASSROOM TEACHING ACTIVITIES

1. Lectures (50 h)

Lectures by the professor on Mondays and Thursdays. These classes will cover the most important aspects of the programme. The materials used in class —such as slides— will be uploaded to ADI at the end of the topic.

2. Activities

Throughout the course we will develop at least 4 group activities, which will take place both within lectures and outside lectures.

3. Evaluation

Exams to assess the successful accomplishment of the objectives.

II. Tutoring

1 hour.

II. PERSONAL WORK

- Personal study: 70 hours.
- Individual work: 26 hours.
- Final exam: 3 hours.

ASSESSMENT

ORDINARY CALL

The final grade of HISTORY OF COMMUNICATION will consist of the following three elements

- Exams: 60%
- Activities (4 at least): 30%
- Class participation: 10%

EXAMS (60%)

There will be one final exam at the end of the semester, which will cover all the content reviewed in class.

Passing the final exam (minimum 5/10) is required in order to pass the course.

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GROUP ACTIVITIES (30%)

Students will be required to complete at least four group activities. The procedure for forming groups, which will be composed of 7–8 students each, will be explained in class.

Some of these activities will involve work outside class, although all of them will also take place partially during sessions.

It is mandatory to be part of a group. If a student does not participate in one or more of the activities, they will not be evaluated for those activities and will lose the corresponding percentage of the final grade.

OTHER ACTIVITIES & CLASS PARTICIPATION (10%)

Apart from the group activities, both the involvement of the students in discussions and their attendance will be taken into account in the final assessment.

RESIT EXAM

Failing the final exam in December or getting less than 5 points on average for the whole course will result in a resit exam in June.

- The exam in June will be similar to the one held in December.

OFFICE HOURS

Email address: jferrary@unav.es

Office number: 0641.

Building: Ismael Sánchez Bella.

Floor: 0

Schedule (by prior email appointment): Tuesdays from 9.00 am to 10.00 am.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES

***All required articles and book chapters are provided in electronic format. Readings that are recommended will be available too. I will occasionally send you additional readings.*

Handbook (English and Spanish versions)

Sánchez Aranda, José Javier, (2020). Communication History: An introduction. EUNSA Find it in the Library printed version Find it in the Library electronic version

Sánchez Aranda, J. J. (2006). Breve historia de la comunicación en el mundo contemporáneo. Pamplona: Ulzama digital. Find it in the Library

OTHER USEFUL SOURCES

Barrera, C. (2004). *Historia del Periodismo Universal*. Ariel.Find it in the Library

Briggs, A., & Burke, P., (2009). A social history of the media: From Gutenberg to Internet. Maiden, MA, Polity. Find it in the Library

Emery, M. C., & Emery, E. (1992). The press and America: an interpretive history of the mass media (7th ed.). Prentice-Hall. Find it in the Library

Fang, I. (1997). History of Mass Communication: Six information revolutions, Taylor & Francis. Find it in the Library

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Kovarik, Bill (2015). Revolutions in Communication: Media History from Gutenberg to the Digital Age (2nd edition). Bloomsbury Academic.Find it in the LIbrary

Sánchez Aranda, J. J. (1998). *Pulitzer: luces y sombras en la vida de un periodista genial.* Eunsa. Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, S.A. Find it in the Library printed version Find it in the Library electronic version