



LSE-PKU Summer School 2020

LPS-MC204 | Chinese media, global contexts: Convergence and conflicts

Instructor

Bingchun Meng is an Associate Professor in the Department of Media and Communications at LSE and the Deputy Head of the Department. She is also the Programme Director for the LSE-Fudan Double Degree Programme in Global Media and Communications. She has published widely on media industries, media and communication governance, comparative media studies and feminist media studies. Her book *The Politics of Chinese Media* was recently published by Palgrave Macmillan.

Course outline

Chinese media and communication industries have been undergoing profound changes in the last few decades. On the one hand, we frequently hear the all-too-familiar stories about censorship and surveillance in China that repress freedom of expression; while on the other hand, the Chinese government prioritizes the communication industry as a key sector driving the economic growth. While champions of liberal democracy have been predominantly critical of the various ‘soft power’ campaigns that the Chinese state initiates, transnational media companies have wasted no time in not only entering the Chinese market but also incorporating Chinese investment. At the industry level, marketization, globalization and media convergence have significantly reconfigured the landscape of content production and distribution in China. For users, the proliferation of media content coupled with the fast development of communication technologies has been a process fraught with exhilaration, confusion and contestation.

This course provides critical analysis of the key aspects of the aforementioned transformation, focusing on the political economy of media and communication industries as well as the mediated politics underpinning stories and texts. It will unpack the operation of media and communication industries at the intersection of politics, business and culture. It will also explore the tensions and conflicts around meanings and narratives at the conjuncture of China’s economic growth, social stratification and geopolitical repositioning.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students shall be able to demonstrate understanding of the key issues below, as well as developing the analytical perspectives and building in-depth empirical knowledge to formulate independent and coherent views on the relevant debate around these issues.

- What are the contemporary features of the organization and operation of media production and distribution?
- How do the institutional relations and political economic contexts shape the production of media content?
- What is the changing nature of creative work in a networked digital environment?
- What are the key tensions around the political, the commercial and the cultural aspects of media and communication products?
- What is the structural transformation that media and communication industries in China have been going through and how that is related to the broader political economy and social transformation?
- What are some of the competing narratives offered by international media about China, by Chinese media to their international and domestic audiences, and by Chinese people of different social class recounting their lived experiences? What are the key themes of mediated politics emerging from these competing narratives?

Assessment

Essay: 50% (1,500 words)

Final Exam: 50%

Topic Session Titles

Session One: The political economy of media and communication industries

Session Two: Media convergence and digital networks

Session Three: Creative labour and user-generated content

Session Four: From the institutional to the textual: Why stories matter?

Session Five: The transformation of Chinese media industries

Session Six: The harsh reality of software campaigns: 'charm offense' and its discontent

Session Seven: Regulated carnivals: Entertainment media in China

Session Eight: Beyond censorship: News production and journalism

Session Nine: From dissidents to *Little Pinko*: Mediated politics in the online space

Session Ten: Summary and reflection

Essential reading

- Miller, T. & Kraidy, M. (2016). *Global media studies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Shirk, S. (Ed.). (2011). *Changing media, changing China*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yang, G. (2009). *The Power of the Internet: Citizen activism online*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Meng, B. (2018). *The politics of Chinese media: Consensus and contestation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.