

Television and Democracy in Italy, spring 2010

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Course description

The object of this course is to understand current debates about the political role of television in Italy and the historical background to these debates. By the end of the course, students will be able to discuss critically: the historical development of public service broadcasting; the historical development of commercial broadcasting; political elites' attitudes towards television; key concepts employed in the Italian media (*lottizzazione, pluralismo*); the conflict-of-interest issue; and current and past legal frameworks for the television and media markets.

Since the media occupy an unusually central role in Italian political life, this course will be useful for all those interested in Italian politics and society, as well as all those who are interested in the media in comparative context.

Course requirements

You will be required to attend class regularly; to participate fully in class discussions; and to lead such discussions on one or two occasions.

There shall be a mid-term and a final examination. These will consist of 20 multiple choice questions and two essay questions. The multiple choice questions will constitute one-third of your mark for each exam; the two essay questions will count for one-third each.

Your overall grade for the course will be determined by your grade in the mid-term and final exams (40% each) and a grade for your participation in class (20%).

Course structure

Each class will consist of a lecture of between seventy and eighty minutes, a short break, a discussion of the week's readings, and a short group exercise.

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The discussion of the week's readings will be led by two students each week. The schedule for this will be decided in our first meeting. The discussion leaders for each session should send me, *by 5pm on the Friday preceding each class*, a short (two page) document listing the main points of interest and questions raised by the week's readings, and their response to each question/point of interest.

Syllabus

Two books by Hibberd (2008) and Stille (2006) must be purchased from the Paperback Exchange (*via delle Oche 4/r*). You will benefit from reading all of these books, and not just the assigned chapters. All remaining readings are available in the course packet.

I expect you to read the assigned chapters or articles thoroughly. I am happy to provide suggestions for further reading should you so wish.

Italian media in comparative context (25th January)

- Hallin and Mancini (2004). A scan is included in the course packet; the (hugely preferable) e-book is available through Bobcat.

My lecture will note some of the major differences between the media in the United States and the media in Western Europe; and talk a bit about public service broadcasting. The whole-class activity will be a discussion of your backgrounds, your reasons for studying the Italian media, and your existing knowledge of Italy.

Italian media in a historical context (1st February)

- Hibberd (2008, chapters 1 and 2)

My lecture will offer a developmental perspective on the Italian media, focusing on limited readership and consequent entry of 'political' media owners. There is no specific whole-class activity this week.

Silvio Berlusconi: Television, Power & Patrimony (Wednesday, February 3rd)

This is a special guest lecture by Prof. Paul Ginsborg. It will be held at 6pm in Villa Ulivi (TBC). In preparation for the lecture, you should read Ginsborg (2005, ch. 5).

The beginnings of broadcasting under Fascism (8th February)

- Richeri (1980)
- Hibberd (2008, ch. 3)

- [Forgacs \(1990b, ch. 3\)](#)
- [Dahl \(2006\)](#)
- [Schumpeter \(1974\)](#)

My lecture will look at Fascism's effect on cultural industries prior to television – radio, cinema, and publishing. The whole class activity will be a discussion on the theme: what role ought the media have in a democracy? What does it mean to say that the media is 'democratic'? This discussion will be based on the Dahl and Schumpeter texts.

Television and public service broadcasting in the post-war period (15th February)

- [Allum \(1990\)](#)
- [Forgacs \(1990a\)](#)
- [Hibberd \(2008, ch. 5\)](#)
- [Padovani \(2005\)](#)
- [Guazzaloca \(2009\)](#)

My lecture will describe the post-war political system and the attitudes of the various parties towards television and radio. The whole class activity will involve writing pen portraits of the kinds of people who voted for each party.

The reform of 1975, part I (22nd February)

- [Volcansek \(2000\)](#). Concentrate on pages 116 to 122. Skim the remainder: you will need it for the session on the 22nd March.
- [Cavazza \(1979\)](#)
- [American Society of Newspaper Editors' Statement of Principles](#)
- [BBC Editorial Guidelines](#). Skim only.
- [Wikipedia Neutral Point of View Policy, FAQ](#)

My lecture will discuss the reasons for the reform of Rai in 1975, and discuss the principles which inspired it. The whole-class activity will be group work where each group has to create scenarios in which competing values in journalism -- impartiality, objectivity, etc., -- clash.

The reform of 1975, part II (1st March)

- [Padovani \(2005, pp. 1-10, 161-221\)](#)
- [Bollinger \(1990\)](#)
- [Lichtenberg \(1990\)](#)

My lecture will discuss the effects of the 1975 reform, in particular dealing with *lottizzazione*. The whole-class activity will be a discussion of a Wikipedia page written on Filiberto Guala by one student (TBC).

Mid-term exam (8th March)

The multiple-choice exam will take place during normal class hours. The essay questions will become available online from 9am that morning. Essays, in .doc, .rtf or .pdf format, **should be e-mailed to me by midnight of that same day.**

Spring break (15th - 19th March)

- [Stille \(2006\)](#)

Read all of the book. It's wonderfully written, it's a portable paperback, and it will give you the necessary context for the remainder of the course.

The start of commercial television (22nd March)

- [Volcansek \(2000\)](#). Concentrate on pages 122 - 140.
- [Hibberd \(2008, ch. 6\)](#)
- [An open letter to Silvio Berlusconi, *The Economist*](#)
- [An Italian Story, *The Economist*](#)

My lecture will identify the main commercial television providers and their buy-out by Silvio Berlusconi. There will be no specific whole-class activity this week.

Commercial television and Rai during the eighties (29th March)

- [Stille \(2006, ch. 5\)](#)
- [Marletti \(1988\)](#)
- [Curran et al. \(2009\)](#)

My lecture will look at the development of commercial television during the eighties, and specifically the types of content produced. The whole group activity will involve watching a news broadcast and noting transitions, types of actors, and timing.

Community radio stations (Date TBC)

A guest lecture by Stefania Milan (European University Institute). An appropriate reading will be circulated before the class. The date and time of this session are still to be confirmed.

Television and the transition of the nineties (12th April)

- [Padovani \(2005, pp. 127-143\)](#)
- [Gundle and O'Sullivan \(1996\)](#)
- [Mazzoleni \(2006\)](#)
- [Marletti and Roncarolo \(2000\)](#)

My lecture will give a potted history of the collapse of the Italian party system in corruption scandals, and the creation of the new party system. The whole-class activity will involve finding out which Italian party is closest to the class's (sincere or feigned) political beliefs using <http://www.euprofiler.eu/>.

Berlusconi and the issue of conflicts of interest (19th April)

- [Hibberd \(2008, ch. 8\)](#)
- [Ginsborg \(2005, ch. 4\)](#)
- [Hine \(2001\)](#)

My lecture will look at Berlusconi's holdings and describe the measures which have been tried to regulate Berlusconi's conflict of interest. The whole-class activity will be to try and design adequate conflict-of-interest legislation.

Control over Rai and the current media market (26th April)

- [Stille \(2006, ch. 13\)](#)
- [Hanretty \(2007\)](#)
- [Hibberd \(2008, ch. 9\)](#)
- [OSCE report on Italy](#). Skim only.
- Open Society Institute reports on Italy for [2005](#) and [2008](#). Skim only.

My lecture will look at the degree of control currently exercised over Rai by Berlusconi and other politicians, and at the state of the media market and prospects for the future. The whole class activity will be a round-up discussion in which you will have the opportunity to revisit things that weren't clear before.

Grading criteria

Your task in the final and mid-term exams is to write a brief answer to the question in the form of an essay.

When I say that your answer must be in the form of an essay, I mean that it should consist of sentences grouped into paragraphs, and that there should be a logical progression between sentences and between paragraphs.

You must answer the question. You have not been asked to write an essay on a topic, but to write an essay which answers a specific question. If, after reading your essay, I cannot summarize your answer to the question, then your answer will not be marked well. Because you are answering a question, you should include only information which is relevant to your answer. Do not feel obliged to show how much you know about the topic. Instead, use that knowledge in your answer.

The terms we use are complicated. They can be understood in different ways. You might have a clear and unambiguous understanding of a given term; you might even believe that your reader shares this clear and unambiguous understanding. But you must make this clear and unambiguous understanding explicit -- and you should do so clearly, and unambiguously.

I am asking you these questions because **they are interesting questions.** They are interesting because they have no single correct answer. You can answer these questions in different ways and still get a high mark.

Whilst there is no single right answer, **there are better and worse answers.** Better answers are answers that are supported by relevant evidence. Relevant evidence for all of these questions can be found in the readings and in the handouts. Citing these readings is desirable but not essential.

Answers that will be marked highly will include: a clear statement of the answer supported by relevant evidence organised into a coherent set of points.

Answers that will be marked poorly may feature: a long list of irrelevant or partially relevant facts, no discussion of the key terms used, no logical progression between parts of the answer, and no attempt at answering the question.

I mark essays on a scale from zero to eighty. The various ranges on this scale can be described in the following fashion:

70-80 work displaying most of the following—excellent or very good range and command of material, analytical and argumentational power, command of the facts and ability to organise them with clarity, insight and efficiency. Grades within this range indicate excellent work. Correspondingly, grades between 70 and 80 merit an A.

60-69 work displaying analytical power and argumentation of the quality associated with scores between 70 and 80, but with less comprehensive and thorough command of evidence; or work showing considerable thoroughness but less analytical skill or less clarity in organisation. Grades within this range indicate good to excellent work. Correspondingly, grades between 60 and 69 merit between A-, on the top end of the

range, and B, on the bottom end of the range. (66 - 69: A- 63 - 65: B+ 60 - 62: B).

50-59 competent work with no major defects, but giving an incomplete account of the question, or marred by inaccuracies; or work which demonstrates lapses in (but does not lack) analytical and argumentational skills. Grades within this range generally indicate satisfactory work. (56 - 59: B- 53 - 55: C+ 50 - 52: C).

40-49 work that is generally weak with muddled argumentation, but containing some evidence of knowledge of facts and analytical skill; or work that, while knowledgeable in itself, does not address the question asked. Grades within this range indicate work which is poor but sufficient to pass. (46 - 49: C- 43 - 45: D+ 40 - 42: D).

30-39 (Pass) very poor quality work, showing only slight evidence of effective study. Grades within this range indicate the worst quality of work which still merits a pass. Grades within this range merit a D-.

You will note that the ranges at the top and bottom ends of the scale are larger than those in the middle. This is intentional. It is not, however, intended that the distribution of grades across these categories will be uniform.

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