

MEDIA, DEMOCRATIZATION AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: FOUNDATIONS FOR A MORE ROBUST RESEARCH AGENDA

Course description for CEU Summer University, 2009
Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

Dates: June 29 – July 15, 2009
Duration: 2.5 weeks (13 week days)

Organized by the Center for Global Communication Studies at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania and the Center for Media and Communication Studies (CMCS), Central European University (CEU). Funding support for student scholarships provided by a generous grant from the Open Society Institute (OSI).

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Statement of Purpose

This intensive summer school on media development is designed to help early-stage researchers gain an understanding of the history, theory, practice, and current trends in the media development sector. The program builds on the successful June 2008 SUN course on “Media, Democratization and Civil Society” that CMCS and Annenberg organized together with the Cost A30 “East of West” European research network in Budapest. It will pick up some of the themes of SUN 2008 and further develop the collaboration between Annenberg and CEU, as well as form new ties with the BBC World Service Trust, the World Bank’s Communication for Governance and Accountability Program (CommGAP) and the James M. Cox, Jr. Center for International Mass Communication, University of Georgia. The program will also benefit from the regional knowledge input of the Budapest-based South East European Network for Professionalization of Media (SEENPM).

In the program, students will be exposed to a wide range of theoretical, methodological, and applied/practitioner perspectives from academics and professionals in the media development arena. As part of the course, participants will help develop a comparative research project, undertake field research, and assess and evaluate findings in a written report, fully supervised by a mentor.

The goals of the course are:

1. To stimulate and advance research, scholarship and academic discourse on media development;
2. To identify a select group of scholars working in this area and nurture their research interests and capabilities;
3. To give participants the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in research related to media development of benefit to the academic and practitioner communities.

As a result of the course, we plan to develop an edited reader on media development, which will feature contributions from the summer course faculty as well as other leading thinkers in the field. SUN participants will have the opportunity to contribute individual field research case studies and comparative analysis developed during the program.

The course will be run as a “master class.” Through lectures and discussion, students will have access to varied perspectives that speak to historical and current trends of theory, research and practice and provide a foundational understanding of the dynamics of the media development field. To maximize the opportunities for interaction with instructors and mentors, the course will be small in size, with a maximum of 20 students.

CGCS will administer the summer school together with CEU’s Center for Media and Communication Studies and the James M. Cox Jr. Center for International Mass Communication Training and Research at the University of Georgia. Other key individuals and organizations involved in media development research and scholarship will play a key role in the program’s design, recruitment, and follow up activities.

Prerequisites

This course is intended for MA students, PhD students and other young researchers interested in work related to media development. The primary target audience is academic, but practitioners are also welcome. Applicants will demonstrate an interest in the connection between theory and practice through practice-oriented research topics, teaching curricula, or previous experience. Applicants will be required to submit a writing sample, a CV, and have sufficient English skills (reading and writing) in order to participate in the course. Applicants are expected to have a demonstrated interest in media development issues as well as possess a basic understanding of statistics. Formal training in research methodology is not required, as one of the goals of this course is to expose students to a variety of tools and approaches to collecting information, analyzing data, and doing comparative research.

Brief Overview

Media has been called democracy's "connective tissue." Media is vital to the institutional and social composition of a democracy, and media are often revered as an agent of change or a facilitator of democratization. As the so-called watchdog of the government, media serve a check-and-balance function by monitoring the government and the political processes, i.e. elections and legislative actions. Media have the additional function of serving as an intermediary between the government and the people.

Since the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, there has been a marked increase in aid monies devoted to media assistance – helping countries in transition reconstruct, develop, and transform their media sectors. What started out as part of efforts aimed at supporting the transition to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and areas of the former Soviet Union has spread throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East.

As the field of media development is maturing, there has been increased attention to the need for media/communication, development, and political studies scholars to engage in a more robust research agenda. Donors, implementers, governments, and many others have called for more empirical research about the role of media in the overall development agenda. CGCS and its partners are in a unique position to respond to this need, and through our networks and organizations can provide expertise, capacity, and resources needed to develop a community of researchers working to better understand the relationship between media and other development goals, including democratization, poverty reduction, conflict resolution, or community building.

Situated at the crossroads of the Central and East European transitions, Budapest provides a fitting backdrop for the proposed summer school on media development. Moreover, in the context of our aim of improving knowledge and capacity to carry out collaborative research projects and to help form the basis for a network of researchers working the media development sector, Budapest and CEU are ideal. Central European University is also a fitting host site for this summer school, with its reputation for encouraging research and scholarship that seeks to understand and contribute to knowledge of democratization and political change, governance and civil society.

The two and a half week course will:

1. Provide an overview and critical reflection of various theories (largely drawing from communication, political science, and development studies) that have informed and played a part in media development and democracy, civil society and governance assistance;
2. Offer an intensive overview of research methods that could be used for conducting research on and about media development;
3. Provide an opportunity for students to take part in a mentored field work experience; and
4. Provide a mentored environment for students to reflect on their field work and write a comparative report based on their research.

The course will include lectures and discussion as well as a fieldwork component that will focus on issues of media in a multi-ethnic environment. In this component of the course, participants will consider how media outside of Hungary's borders is regulated, produced, and disseminated as well as how the media have contributed to the development of the communities in question. The participants also will learn about curricula of academic journalism and mass communication programs in the region.

This course is not meant to be an exhaustive examination of the subject matter covered, but rather a general survey course intended to help and inspire researchers interested in the field of media development. The goal is provide a foundation for future research—to help participants understand and develop their research objectives, including MA and PhD topics.

“Media development”—media assistance to strengthen independent journalism and develop and sustain media outlets, often in the service of deepening democratic institutions—is distinct from, but closely related to, the issue of “media and development” or “communications for development.” The latter focuses on media's role *in* development—the role that media play in strengthening government institutions, growing the economy, and advancing social, health and education concerns. This seminar will address the differences as well as coming together of the media development and communications for development fields throughout the course, but especially in the final week, with the lectures given by Sina Odugbemi (World Bank, CommGAP) and James Deane (BBC World Service Trust).

Participants in this summer school will have the additional opportunity to hear from invited guests on a host of timely and relevant topics of interest to the media development sector. These talks are meant to stimulate debate and discussion amongst participants and to introduce them to the wide range of issues and concerns that the media development sector engages in. Examples of these seminars include:

- Media and Good Governance
- Roma media
- Children and Media
- Convergence and Digital Media
- Media, Conflict and Peace Building
- Satellites and Transnational Broadcasting
- Community Media
- Free speech, cultural norms, and censorship
- Journalism education

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