# Sensor Guide MEVIT4310 Autumn 2020

**Course description**

Innovation is one of the key terms of our current era. We all know the imperative: to innovate, change, disrupt, transform, make new - all in the service of new business opportunities, technologies, efficiency, and progress. In this course we will critically interrogate this concept, asking what innovation is or can be, and examining how innovation is practiced and who is recognizable as an innovator. Why has it become a dominant way of conceptualizing organizational and cultural transformation in the 21st century? Why do we often think of innovation in terms of new, shiny objects or new technologies? What ways of living and making are marginalized in mainstream ideas of innovation?

The main aim of this course is to encourage students to question assumptions about the nature, actors, practices, actors and locations of innovations. It will do so by exploring what the technological, creative and innovative might mean, and who or what gets to be part of those definitions, studying a wide range of examples from the media sector, including TV, journalism, and the cultural industries. The course will draw on perspectives from science and technology studies (STS), organizational studies, sociology, anthropology and design, human-computer interaction (HCI), as well as media and communication studies.

**Course structure**

The course was structured into 7 4-hour combined lecture/seminars. The first seminar addressed the question of what (media) innovation is or might be,  introducing students to the perspectives of Rogers' diffusion of innovation, the model of interessement by Akrich et al (STS and ANT-focused approach important in organization studies and HCI), as well as von Hippel's notion of Free Innovation. The second seminar problematized the concept of innovation, focusing on countering wide-spread innovation speak. Students were introduced to the concept of Jugaad and read excerpts of Lily Irani's book Chasing Innovation. They were also introduced to a critical history of the entrepreneur, beginning with Schumpeter, Foucault's entrepreneurial subject and Wendy Brown's neoliberal critique. The third seminar considered how innovation might happen through the practices of those who are not usually included in discourses around innovation, focusing on the figures of the pirate, tricksters, hacker and other "mis-users" of media. We considered the importance of grey markets,  informal media economies and media use itself as a generative force. The next three seminars were focused on case-studies from different media sectors: 1) TV and the new screen ecology; 2) Digital Journalism; 3) Platforms and creative industries. Students learned about diverse topics such as: indie television production, streaming services, multi-channel networks, content creators, digital labour, and AI and the digitalization of journalism. The final seminar considered again the question of (media) innovation, this time by considering the "shadows of innovation", focusing on notions of repair and maintenance.

Throughout the course we problematized the concept of innovation, not taking it at face value but interrogating it as a master signifier, strategic concept, and multi-dimensional phenomena. The students were therefore encouraged to think broadly and critically about media innovation and the work that these terms do and the contexts within which they operate.

**Learning outcome**

After completing this course, students will be able to:
- Develop their critical acumen with regards to ideas of innovation, as they relate to the media sector in particular.
- Familiarize themselves with a wide range of scholarly perspectives on critical innovation theory.
- Situate a reflection on innovation within broader discussions of identity (e.g. gender, race, class, disability) and practice (e.g. hacking, subversion, repair).
- Conduct independent research (in groups or individually) on a self-selected case of media innovation and present this in class.
- Critically evaluate and analyze media innovation as a multi-dimensional phenomenon

**Term paper exam**

The students were asked to submit a term paper on the following broad instructions:

*Choose something you consider an example of a media innovation and construct a research question which you shall answer throughout the text. You are free to choose the empirical materials/data sources/cases and the analytical approaches in answering the research question. Make sure to use relevant parts of the literature from the syllabus, in addition to self-chosen academic sources. Use a minimum of 5 scholarly sources.*

**Formal requirements**

- The term paper should be approximately 10 pages, where one page is about 2300 characters excluding spaces.
- The front page, literature list and appendices do not count towards the 10 pages.
- You must use a reference style (e.g. Harvard, Chicago, MLA, APA) consistently and precisely throughout your submission and in the literature list.

**Grading instructions**

The exam question was designed to encourage students to think creatively and analytically about what media innovation is and can be, by deliberately leaving it open to the students to define and operationalize their terms. **To successfully answer** the exam question, students must demonstrate that they are able to conduct independent research on a self-selected case of media innovation. This means that the papers should have a clearly delineated research question or problem statement, at least one case or example, and adequately analyze this case with regards to the stated question or problem. Students are expected to refer to key texts on the literature, in addition to self-chosen academic sources. The reason they have to use a minimum of 5 scholarly sources is to encourage them to draw connections to the different strands of the course literature, in addition to domain specific literature

In order to prepare for the exam, students had to submit a mandatory term paper outline (2-3 pages) by the end of the semester, containing information on the following points:

1. Introduction
2. Topic and motivation for choosing the topic
3. Problem statement: Research question
4. Key concepts and theories
5. Empirical material/approach/case/methods (**what** are you analyzing and **how**)
6. A list of references (both from the syllabus + relevant **academic literature** chosen from outside the syllabus that pertains more specifically to your term paper topic)

Each student received detailed written feedback on their outline by the teacher. We also discussed the components and common mistakes of a term paper several times during class.

**Please keep in mind**, that the students were not required to conduct an empirical study for this term paper in terms of collecting new data materials, but were encouraged instead to find analytical cases and examples that could be used to discuss their chosen research question. **Also**, there was no requirement to write a term paper on the topics and questions submitted for the mandatory outline. Thus, we may not automatically assume that what they ended up writing in their term paper had already been subject to feedback and advice.

**More specifically**: graders will further evaluate term papers vis-à-vis:

1) Completeness and coherency of responses to the primary questions to be addressed in the paper

2) An excellent paper will clearly demonstrate the fulfillment of the majority of the learning outcomes defined for the course. This means for example that excellent papers demonstrate a critical sensitivity to the idea of innovation, explicitly addresses the ways in which a case or chosen example can be regarded as innovative (or not). Excellent or very good papers also situate a reflection of innovation within broader societal, political and cultural concerns.

3) Demonstration of close familiarity with course literature and topic specific scholarly sources. An excellent paper will make strong use of relevant course and self-chosen readings. While online and popular sources are allowed, if clearly relevant, it is expected that the majority of resources made use of and included in the reference list will come from the course readings and the student's own research via scholarly library resources.

4) Writing, documentation, and weighting of components of the paper. Papers will be graded according to standard requirements for academic excellent writing – beginning with clear introduction, fully developed body, and then a summary/conclusion, coupled with careful and consistent documentation techniques following a major academic style sheet (e.g., APA, Chicago).

5) Language requirements. The course is taught in English, but students can choose whether they want to submit the exam in Norwegian or English. Screen cultures students are an exception to this, as they have to submit their exam in English.

**Grading criteria:**

**A / Excellent** – fulfills these specific benchmarks:
Answers / responds to the problems / questions defined by the assignment. Independent, clear and

interesting reflection and arguments; relevant examples and very good use of theory (where relevant). Clear and precise language; clear connections; very well focused and consistent / clear structure. Convincing with regard to the use of relevant facts; and demonstrates very clear familiarity with the course readings. High level of familiarity with relevant theories, figures, etc. in media and communication studies; high analytical competency. Very well proportioned in terms of appropriate length for specific elements and contents of the essay. Clear impression of original and interesting work.

## B / Very good

A very good performance. The candidate demonstrates sound judgement and a very good degree of independent thinking. Solid critical and nuanced argument that shows in-depth understanding of the literature and is well supported by it.

## C / Good

A good performance in most areas. The candidate demonstrates a reasonable degree of judgement and independent thinking in the most important areas. Reasonably good knowledge of the literature. There is evidence that the syllabus has been read. Basic concepts have been understood. Different argument are considered critically. Overall, though, the paper tends to repeat the literature, with little evidence of originality or an independent stance. At this level, papers may also demonstrate somewhat unclear and imprecise language, inconsistent use of concepts, somewhat erroneous or insufficient account of facts or theoretical concepts.

## D / Satisfactory

A satisfactory performance, but with significant shortcomings. The candidate demonstrates a limited degree of judgement and independent thinking. Does not give a clear answer, not well structured, not well focused, presents relevant material but it is not clear where the discussion is going. If there is an argument this is not critical and/or is one- sided. At this level, papers may demonstrate unclear and imprecise language, inconsistent use of concepts, unclear structure, erroneous or insufficient account of facts or theoretical perspectives, unnecessary or irrelevant elements, implicit or unclear account, erroneous or inconsistent use of references.

## E / Sufficient

A performance that meets the minimum criteria, but no more. The candidate demonstrates a very limited degree of judgement and independent thinking. Only satisfies the minimum requirements. No command of the subject matter. Not independent.

## F / Fail

A performance that does not meet the minimum academic criteria. The candidate demonstrates an absence of both judgement and independent thinking. Lacks detailed knowledge, is confusing and hard to grasp. Does not satisfy the minimum requirements.

**Course coordinator: Taina Bucher**