

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Communication Theories and Models

Academic year 2025-2026

1. Programme-related data

1.1. Higher Education Institution	Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
1.2. Faculty	Faculty of Political, Administrative, and Communication Sciences
1.3. Doctoral School	Doctoral School of Communication, Public Relations, and Advertising
1.4. Field of study	Communication Sciences
1.5. Level of study	DOCTORAL STUDIES

2. Course-related data

2.1. Course title	COMMUNICATION THEORIES AND MODELS			Course code	SDCRPP1
2.2. Course coordinator	Prof. univ. Delia Cristina Bălaş (Balaban) PH.D.				
2.3. Seminar coordinator	Prof. univ. Vincze Orsolya Hahha PhD				
2.4. Year of study	1	2.5. Semester	1	2.6. Type of assessment	Viva voce
2.7. Course status	Compulsory		2.8. Course type	Core subject	

3. Total estimated time (hours per semester of teaching activities)

3.1. Number of hours per week	4	of which: 3.2. course	2	3.3. seminar/ laboratory/ project	2
3.4. Total of hours in the curriculum	56	of which: 3.5. course	28	3.6. seminar/ laboratory	28
Time allocation for individual study (IS) and self-taught activities (ST)					hours
Learning from textbooks, course materials, bibliography, and notes (IS)					47
Additional research in the library, on subject-specific electronic platforms, and on-site					46
Preparing seminars/ laboratories/ projects, assignments, reports, portfolios, and essays					47
Tutoring (professional guidance)					2
Examinations					2
Other activities					
3.7. Total hours of individual study (IS) and self-taught activities (ST)				144	
3.8. Total hours per semester				200	
3.9. Number of credits				8	

4. Prerequisites (where applicable)

4.1. curriculum-related	
4.2. skills-related	

5. Specific conditions (where applicable)

5.1. course-related	
5.2. seminar/laboratory-related	

6. Subject-specific learning outcomes

Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critically analyses and delineates advanced concepts of media and digital media, with an emphasis on the transmission of communication through electronic technologies and their theoretical implications.• Comparatively evaluates mass communication theories applicable to television, the press, and radio, analysing their impact on public opinion formation and processes of social influence.• Interprets complex processes of mediated human interaction and communication from political, economic, cultural, social, semiotic, and hermeneutic perspectives, integrating classical and contemporary theoretical frameworks.• Applies and critically assesses theoretical and epistemological methodologies used in advanced scientific research, including the formulation of research problems, hypothesis development, research design, data analysis, and the validation of conclusions.• Critically evaluates the use of artificial intelligence, machine learning, advanced statistics, and databases in communication analysis and in extracting meaning from complex datasets.• Analyses theoretical and methodological strategies for managing large volumes of data in communication research, using machine learning algorithms to identify discursive patterns and generate knowledge applicable in socio-economic and organizational contexts.• Evaluates and selects computational data visualisation tools for the representation and critical interpretation of communication phenomena, using maps, charts, diagrams, infographics, and graphs as analytical supports.• Analyses and uses advanced digital tools for analysing, aggregating, and interactively exploring multidimensional data, facilitating the investigation of communication phenomena from multiple and interdisciplinary perspectives.
Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applies communication theory frameworks to formulate rigorous and relevant research questions, ensuring conceptual coherence and argumentative consistency in the scientific endeavour.• Applies methodological and epistemological strategies to formulate and operationalise research hypotheses in the study of communication processes, in order to maximise validity and analytical robustness.• Uses systematic methods to select, evaluate, and organise scholarly literature to ensure the quality and relevance of the theoretical grounding of communication research.• Applies critical analysis techniques to academic sources and textual materials to identify key concepts, theoretical relationships, and research gaps in the field of communication.• Applies synthesis and information-structuring methods to write clear, coherent academic abstracts that comply with international scientific publication standards.• Uses techniques for extracting and integrating information from theoretical texts and empirical studies to support scholarly argumentation and position research within current academic debates.
Responsibility and autonomy

- Interprets and synthesises new and complex information from diverse sources.
- Supports researchers in conducting experiments, performing analyses, developing new products or processes, constructing theory, and undertaking quality control activities.
- Carries out the classification of information into categories.
- Conducts quantitative and qualitative research through systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena using statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques.
- Writes short and extended academic abstracts for national and international scientific conferences, respecting disciplinary conventions, editorial requirements, and standards of clarity, coherence, and theoretical rigour.
- Synthesises theoretical and methodological research contributions into concise and relevant formulations, adapted to different formats of scientific dissemination.

Produces highlights for scientific papers, emphasising originality, theoretical relevance, and the implications of research in the field of communication studies.

7. Contents

7.1. Course	Teaching and learning methods	Remarks ¹
Introduction	Presentation and discussion	
Epistemological and ontological foundations of communication theories – classical and contemporary paradigms: positivism, interpretivism, constructivism, critical theory, and post-structuralism.	Presentation and discussion	
Theories of digitally mediated communication – platformization, algorithms, artificial intelligence, media ecologies, and transformations of the public sphere.	Presentation and discussion	
Communication, knowledge, and the production of truth – expertise, epistemic authority, science, disinformation, and discursive legitimacy.	Presentation and discussion	
Interdisciplinarity in communication theories – relationships with sociology, philosophy, political science, anthropology, media studies, and data science.	Presentation and discussion	
Metatheory and theory construction in communication studies – theory evaluation, criteria of validity, theoretical transfer, and the development of original conceptual frameworks.	Presentation and discussion	
Communication theories and doctoral research methodology	Presentation and discussion	

¹ For example, organisational aspects, recommendations for students, specific aspects relating to the course/seminar, such as inviting experts in the field, etc.

- the relationship between theory, research questions, hypotheses, and methodological design.		
Documentation and strategies for using bibliographic databases. Literature review and presentation.	Presentation and discussion	
Citations, references, bibliographic techniques, and citation management software.	Presentation and discussion	
The title and the abstract: structure and typology.	Presentation and discussion	
Information on thesis writing. Chapter structure and formatting elements.	Presentation and discussion	

Literature

Balaban, Delia Cristina (2010): *Comunicare mediatică*, Tritonic, București.

Balaban, Delia Cristina (2005): *Directii de dezvoltare în știința comunicării*, în: *Revista Transilvană de științele comunicării*, nr.1/2005, p. 7-18.

Balaban, Delia Cristina (2007): *Locul și rolul British Cultural Studies în cercetarea efectelor media*, în: *Revista Transilvană de științele comunicării*, nr.4/2007, p. 30-35.

Balaban, Delia Cristina (2008): *Noi teorii în cercetarea efectelor comunicării media. Framing sau teoria cadrelor de interpretare*, în *Revista Media*, nr. 2/2008.

Castells, M. (2010). *The rise of the network society* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

Dobrescu Paul/ Bârgăoanu, Alina/ Corbu Nicoleta (2007): *Istoria comunicării*, editura comunicare.ro, București.

DeFleur, M. L. & DeFleur, M. H. (2022). *Mass Communication Theories Explaining Origins, Processes, and Effects*. Routledge

Manning, J. (2017). Theoretical traditions. In *The sage encyclopedia of communication research methods* (Vol. 4, pp. 1761-1763). SAGE Publications, Inc, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483381411.n625>

McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory* (6th ed.). Sage.

Van Dick, Jose (2013). *The Culture of Connectivity. A critical History of Social Media*, Oxford University Press.

van Dijck, J., Poell, T., & de Waal, M. (2018). *The platform society*. Oxford University Press.

7.2. Seminar/ laboratory	Teaching and learning methods	Remarks
1. Definitions and elements of communication: media, mass media, new media, social media, media typologies.	Oral presentation and discussion	
2. The development of a research project, from the formulation of the topic, objectives, and research questions to the methodological design, Part I.	Oral presentation and discussion	
3. The development of a research project, from the formulation of the topic, objectives, and research questions to the methodological design, Part II.	Oral presentation and discussion	

4. The main areas of research in media communication and their methodological approaches.	Oral presentation and discussion	
5. Paradigms in communications sciences I	Oral presentation and discussion	
6. Paradigms in communications sciences II	Oral presentation and discussion	
7. Analog versus digital versus social media	Oral presentation and discussion	
8. Media effects theories	Oral presentation and discussion	Social media will be discussed.
9. <i>Agenda Setting, Framing and Priming</i>	Oral presentation and discussion	Social media will be discussed.
10. Uses and Gratification Approach (UGA)	Oral presentation and discussion	Social media will be discussed.
11. Public sphere, public opinion	Oral presentation and discussion	
12. Presentations of the PhD projects.		

Literature

Balaban, Delia Cristina (2010): *Comunicare mediatică*, Tritonic, București.

Balaban, Delia Cristina (2005): *Direcții de dezvoltare în știința comunicării*, în: *Revista Transilvană de științele comunicării*, nr.1/2005, p. 7-18.

Balaban, Delia Cristina (2007): *Locul și rolul British Cultural Studies în cercetarea efectelor media*, în: *Revista Transilvană de științele comunicării*, nr.4/2007, p. 30-35.

Balaban, Delia Cristina (2008): *Noi teorii în cercetarea efectelor comunicării media. Framing sau teoria cadrelor de interpretare*, în *Revista Media*, nr. 2/2008.

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van Dijck, J., Poell, T., & de Waal, M. (2018). *The platform society*. Oxford University Press.

8. Evaluation

Type of activity	8.1 Evaluation criteria ²	8.2 Evaluation methods ³	8.3 Percentage in the final grade
8.4. Course	Project presentation	Oral evaluation	60%
8.5. Seminar/ laboratory	Presentation of a research project	Evaluation during the semester	40%
8.6 Minimum standard for passing			
The Ph.D. candidate should be able to understand, theoretically contextualize, and critically evaluate the methodological and ethical challenges of studying communication, and to develop interpretative, analytical, and problematization skills within different communication paradigms and theories.			

9. SDG labels (Sustainable Development Goals)⁴

	Sustainable Development Generic Label						

Date of entry:
September 2025

Signature of course coordinator
Prof. dr. Delia Bălaș, PhD

Signature of seminar coordinator
Prof. dr. Vincze Orsolya, PhD

Date of approval in the department:
September 2025

Signature of the head of department
Prof. dr. Delia Bălaș, PhD

² The evaluation criteria must directly reflect the learning outcomes targeted at the level of the degree programme respectively at the level of the subject. More specifically, the learning outcomes set out in the expected learning outcomes are assessed.

³ Both final evaluation methods and ongoing evaluation strategies should be established.

⁴ Select a single label which, according to the [Implementation of SDG labels in the academic process](#), best matches the subject. If the subject addresses sustainable development in a generic manner (i.e. by presenting/introducing the general framework of sustainable development, etc.), then the Sustainable Development generic label may be applied. If none of the labels describe the subject, select the last option: "No label applies."