

PhD course: Classics of Media Research TRAIN network 2026

The main goal of the course is to make PhD students familiar with key paradigms in media and communication research during the 20th century; to deepen understanding of the contexts and debates from which these traditions have emerged and developed; and to evaluate their relevance to contemporary media landscapes and communication practices.

The course includes two intense two-day sessions, one at Södertörn University and one at Örebro University. These sessions will present the following themes and traditions: older/more foundational perspectives on the media (mass communication theory; uses and gratification theory; medium theory; critical theory/Frankfurt school) as well as more contemporarily oriented perspectives (feminist/intersectional media studies; cultural studies / audience studies; discourse and social change; mediated communication as social interaction) and, not least, overarching societal and media perspectives (public sphere theory; structuralism/poststructuralism). Reading lists will in each case highlight "classic" texts; lectures/seminars will further illuminate their scientific traditions and societal contexts and discuss their implications in relation to contemporary agendas. Examination includes participation at the lectures and seminars as well as a written essay, that will be distributed and discussed among participants at the third, concluding session, coinciding with TRAIN's summit.

The course is convened by Jonas Andersson (jonas.andersson@sh.se) and Mats Eriksson (mats.eriksson@oru.se). Lecturers involve scholars from the universities of Södertörn and Örebro. The course is open to all PhD candidates in media and communication studies affiliated with a university within the TRAIN network. Questions regarding the course and its outline can be sent to Jonas or Mats.

Last day for registration is **15 December 2025**. For registration:

<https://www.oru.se/utbildning/utbildning-pa-forskarniva/forskarutbildningskurser/humus/mkv/medieforskningens-klassiker-75-hp/>

Classics of Media Research, 7,5 ECTS credits

The aim of the course is that participants acquire:

- a good orientation within the central traditions in 20th Century media and communication research
- an understanding of the societal and scientific context from which the studied theories and approaches have developed
- an ability to review, analyse and critically discuss advanced texts within the various traditions of media and communication research in both speech and writing
- insights into the possibilities and limitations of the various traditions of media and communication research, and the ability to evaluate their contemporary relevance

Reading

A core part of the reading list consists of classical texts, many of which have also been selected for the one book that will be used throughout the course: *Classics in Media Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2024), edited by Stina Bengtsson, Fredrik Stiernstedt, and Staffan Ericson. Further selections have been added by the lecturers, adding up to approximately 200 pages per lecture/seminar. Since the amount of reading is considerable, and all relevant texts should be read by participants before each session, the acquiring/reading of texts should commence soon after admission.

Participants are expected to prepare for each session by summarizing a few points of interest raised by the readings/questions for the seminar to discuss.

Examination

For examination, two possible grades will apply: *Pass* or *Fail*. Active participation in seminars is a requirement for *Pass*. The written examination consists of one essay, discussing up to two of the research traditions/texts presented during the course. While this task may be approached in different ways (critique, comparison, tentative applications, etc), and in parts draw on literature or exemplifications exceeding the syllabus, the core of the essay should in all cases be directed towards the obligatory texts and learning outcomes of the course. Essays should be 5,000 words (+/- 10%), including references. (Use Word, Times 12pt, 1,5 spacing, normal margins.) Following submissions, discussants of each paper will be appointed for the final seminar during the TRAIN meeting.

Essays should be submitted to Jonas Andersson jonas.andersson@sh.se no later than 14.00, April 16, 2026.

Schedule and literature

Session 1: 10–11 February 2026

Venue: PA238 in Primus Building, Södertörn University.

10 February

12.00–13.00: Reading scholarly classics in fraught times:

Canonization for whom and why? (Jonas Andersson)

- Bengtsson, Stina; Ericson, Staffan; Stiernstedt, Fredrik (2024). "Introduction". In Bengtsson, S. et al. (eds.) *Classics in Media Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 1–8.
- Said, Edward (1982). "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community". *Critical Inquiry*, 9(1): 1–26.

13.00–15.00: Mass Communication theory / Uses & Gratifications (Sofia Johansson)

Literature:

- Andersson, Jonas (2024). "Herta Herzog (1941) 'On Borrowed Experience'". In Bengtsson, S. et al. (eds.) *Classics in Media Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 24–38.
- Ross, Sven (2024). "Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton (1948) 'Mass Communication, Popular Taste and Organised Social Action'". In Bengtsson, S. et al. (eds.) *Classics in Media Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 53–69.
- Herzog, Herta (1941). "On Borrowed Experience". *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, vol 11(1): 65–95. (30 p)
- Katz, Elihu, and Paul F Lazarsfeld (1955). *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications*. Glencoe, Ill: Free Press. (15 p)
- Lazarsfeld, Paul F. & Robert Merton (1948). "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action". In Bryson, Lyman (ed.) *The Communication of Ideas: A Series of Addresses*. New York: Harper Books: 95–118. (24 p)

Reference literature:

- Livingstone, Sonia (2006). "The Influence of *Personal Influence* on the Study of Audiences". *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 608(1): 233–250. (18 p)
- Rowland, Allison L. & Peter Simonson (2014). "The Founding Mothers of Communication Research: Toward a History of a Gendered Assemblage." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 31 (1): 3–26. doi:10.1080/15295036.2013.849355. (23 p)

15.00–15.15: Fika

15.15–17.15: Cultural Studies / Audience Studies (Stina Bengtsson)

Literature:

- Fornäs, Johan (2024). "Stuart Hall (1973) 'Encoding and Decoding'". In Bengtsson, S. et al. (eds.) *Classics in Media Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 151–165.
- Bengtsson, Stina (2024). "Janice Radway (1984) 'Reading the Romance'". In Bengtsson, S. et al. (eds.) *Classics in Media Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 310–321.
- Hall, Stuart (1973). "Encoding/Decoding in the Television Discourse". Stencilled occasional paper from CCCS no. 7, Birmingham: Birmingham University/CCCS. (21 p)
- Hermes, Joke (1993). "On media, meaning and everyday life". *Cultural Studies*, 7(3): 493–506. DOI 10.1080/09502389300490321 (14 p)
- Radway, Janice (1984/1991). *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, pp. 1–18 and 209–222.
- Williams, Raymond (1961/1965). "The Analysis of Culture". *The Long Revolution*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 57–70.

Reference literature:

- Erni, John Nguyet (2001/2006). "Media Studies and Cultural Studies: A Symbiotic Convergence". In Miller, Toby (ed.) *A Companion to Cultural Studies*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, pp. 187–213.

11 February

Venues: PA239 and PA238 in Primus building, Södertörn University.

PA239: 10.00–12.00: Medium Theory (Maria Kyrakidou)

Literature:

- Forsler, Ingrid (2024). "Marshall McLuhan (1967) 'The Medium is the Message'". In Bengtsson, S. et al. (eds.) *Classics in Media Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 111–124.
- Forsman, Michael (2024). "Neil Postman (1985) 'Amusing Ourselves to Death'". In Bengtsson, S. et al. (eds.) *Classics in Media Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 322–334.
- McLuhan, Marshall (1964/2013). *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Berkeley, CA: Gingko Press, pp. 4–72 (Part I) and 260–326.
- Innis, Harold (1951/2006). "The Bias of communication". In *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 33–60.
- Postman, Neil (1985). *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, pp. 3–29 (Ch. 1 and 2) and 83–113 (Ch. 6 and 7).
- Haraway, Donna J. (2016). *Manifestly Haraway*. Minneapolis, MA & London: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 3–90 ("A Cyborg Manifesto").

12.00–13.00: Lunch

PA238: 13.00–15.00: Critical Theory / Frankfurt School (Staffan Ericson)

Literature:

- Andersson, Linus (2024). "Walter Benjamin (1936) 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'". In Bengtsson, S. et al. (eds.) *Classics in Media Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 9–23.
- Wallenstein, Sven-Olov (2024). "Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (1947) 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception'". In Bengtsson, S. et al. (eds.) *Classics in Media Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 39–52.
- Horkheimer, Max (1931). "The state of contemporary philosophy and the task of an institute for social research", originally in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, vol 1:1, reprinted from *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, S.E. Bronner & Douglas Kellner (eds.), London: Routledge, 1989 (6 p)
- Adorno, Theodor & Max Horkheimer (1944). "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception", in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Continuum, 1993. (42 p)
- Benjamin, Walter (1936). "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", first translation in Benjamin, W., *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken, 1968. (30 p)
Accessible via:
<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm>
- Lowenthal, Leo (1944/1961). "The Triumph of Mass Idols". In Marshall, P. (ed.) *The Celebrity Culture Reader*. London & New York: Routledge, 2006. (24 p)
- Katz et al., section on Frankfurt school (articles by JD Peters, P Scannell, E Illouz). (44 p)

Reference literature:

- Habermas, Jürgen (1981). "Modernity versus Postmodernity", *New German Critique*, 21(3): 3–14.
- Jameson, Fredric (1984). "Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism", *New Left Review*, July-August issue.
- Baudrillard, Jean (1985). "The Masses: The Implosion of the Social in the Media", *New Literary History*, 16(3): 577–589.

15.00–15.15: Fika

PA239: 15.15–17.15: Feminist / Intersectional Media Studies (Isabel Löfgren)

Literature:

- Johansson, Sofia (2024). "Laura Mulvey (1975) 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'". In Bengtsson, S. et al. (eds.) *Classics in Media Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 196–210.

- Nascimento, Beatriz (1988). "For a (New) Existential and Physical Territory". In: Smith, C. A. (2024) *The Black Radical Thought of Beatriz Nascimento: The Dialectic Is in the Sea*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 27–37. (10 p) Available at: <https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/169912/1/Nascimento%20Introduction%20and%20Texts.FINAL%20REVISION.pdf> (NB: The pdf contains an introduction to the author's work which is optional reading, but good for context.)
- hooks, bell (1992). "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators". In *Black Looks, Race, and Representation*. Boston, MA: South End Press, pp. 115–131. (16 p) Available at: https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/postgraduate/masters/modules/femlit/bell_hooks.pdf
- hooks, bell (1999). "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination". In Frankenberg, R. (ed.) *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 338–346. (8 p). Available at: https://pages.mtu.edu/~jds/ack/readings/CSReadings/hooks_Representing_Whiteness_Black_Imagination.pdf
- Cusicanqui, Silvia Rivera (2005). "Alternative histories: An essay on two Bolivian 'sociologists of the image'". In: *Invisible Realities: Internal Markets and Subaltern Identities in Contemporary Bolivia*. SEPHIS-SEASREP. pp. 5–23. (18 p). Available at: <https://sephis.org/lecture-tours/invisible-realities-internal-markets-and-subaltern-identities-in-contemporary-bolivia/>
- Cusicanqui, Silvia Rivera (2012, trans. Brenda Baletti). "Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization". *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Winter: 95–109. Available at: <https://criticaltheoryworkshop.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/rivera-cusicanqui-chixinakax-eng.pdf>

Session 2: 17–18 March 2026

Venue: F103 in Forum building, Örebro University

17 March

13.00–15.00: Mediated Communication as social interaction (Mats Ekström)

Literature:

- Ytreberg, Espen (2024). "Erving Goffman (1959) 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life'". In Bengtsson, S. et al. (eds.) *Classics in Media Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 84–95.
- Clayman, Steve (1992). "Footing in the Achievement of Neutrality", in John Heritage & Paul Drew (eds.), *Talk at Work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goffman, Erving (1981). *Forms of Talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, (chapter 3 on Footing).
- Horton, D. & Wohl, R.R. (1956). "Mass communication and para-social interaction:

- Observations on intimacy at a distance". *Psychiatry*, 19: 215–229.
- Scannell, Paddy (1989). "Public Service Broadcasting and Modern Public Life". *Media, Culture & Society*, 11(2): 135–166.
- Scannell, Paddy (2007). *Media and Communication*. London: Sage, pp. 145–196.

Reference literature

- Thompson, J.B. (1995). *The Media and Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Chapter 3.

15.00-15.15: Fika

15.15-17.00: The Social Construction of News and Knowledge (Anna Roosvall)

Literature:

- Roosvall, Anna (2024). "Gaye Tuchman (1978) 'Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality'". In Bengtsson, S. et al. (eds.) *Classics in Media Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 227–241.
- Berger P. & Luckmann T. (1966). "Introduction: The problem of the sociology of knowledge", in *The Social Construction of Reality*. London: Penguin, pp. 13–30.
- Hall, Stuart (1997). "The Work of Representation", in *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage. Chapter 1, pp. 15–29.
- Tuchman, Gaye (1978). *Making News: A study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: Free Press, chapter 1 "News as Frame" (pp. 1–14), chapter 9 "News as constructed reality" (pp. 182–197), chapter 10 "News as knowledge" (pp. 198–215).
- Tuchman, Gaye (1978/2000). "The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media", in Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels & James Walker Benet (eds.) *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, 1978. (25 p). Accessible here: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-1-349-62397-6_9

Reference literature

- Couldry, N. & Hepp, A. (2016). *The Mediated Construction of Reality*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Chapters 1 "Introduction" and 2 "The Social World as Communicative Construction".
- Hall, Stuart (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage. Chapter 4 "The Spectacle of the Other".
- Tuchman, Gaye (1978). *Making News: A study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: Free Press. Chapter 2 "Space and the news net" (pp. 15–37), chapter 3 "Time and typification" (39–62).

18 March

Venue: F103 in Forum building, Örebro University

10.00–12.00: Communication, Discourse, Social Change (Göran Eriksson)

Literature

- Egan Sjölander, Annika (2024). "Michel Foucault (1971) 'The Order of Discourse'". In Bengtsson, S. et al. (eds.) *Classics in Media Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 125–138.
- Fairclough, Norman (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (Introduction, Chapter 3 ("A Social Theory of Discourse") and Chapter 7 ("Discourse & Social Change in Contemporary Society").
- Fowler, Roger; Bob Hodge; Gunther Kress; Tony Trew (1979). *Language and Control*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. (Chapter 10: "Critical Linguistics" 185–213).
- Machin, David (2013). What is multimodal critical discourse studies? *Critical Discourse Studies*, 10(4), 347–355. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2013.813770>
- Wodak, Ruth and Meyer, Michael (2016). *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies* (3rd edition). Sage Publications.

Reference literature

- Bernstein, Basil (1990). *Class, Codes and Control*, Vol 4: The Structuring of Pedagogic Discourse. London: Routledge. Chapter 5: "The Social Construction of Pedagogic Discourse", pp. 165–217.
- Foucault, Michel (1984). The Order of Discourse. In: Michael J. Shapiro (ed.) *Language and Politics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 108–138.

12.00–13.00: Lunch

13.00–15.00 The Public Sphere (Peter Berglez)

Literature:

- Kaun, Anne (2024). "Jürgen Habermas (1962) 'The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society'". In Bengtsson, S. et al. (eds.) *Classics in Media Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 96–110.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1964/1974). "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article". *New German Critique*, 3: 49–55.
- Fraser, Nancy (1990). "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy". *Social Text*, 25/26: 56–80.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1981/1992). "A Backwards Glance: Weber's Theory of Modernity". In: *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume Two: The Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Cambridge: Polity, 303–331.

Reference literature

- Habermas, Jürgen (1981/1991). "A Backwards Glance: Weber's Theory of Modernity". In: *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Cambridge: Polity, 273–337.
- Calhoun, Craig (ed.) (1992). *Habermas and the public sphere*, Cambridge, MA & London: MIT Press.
- Negt, Oskar & Alexander Kluge (1972/1993). *Public sphere and experience. Toward an analysis of the bourgeois and proletarian public sphere*, Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.

15.00–15.15: Fika

15.15–16.00: Summing up and discussion: Classics and their relevance
(Peter Berglez, Göran Eriksson & Mats Eriksson)

Session 3: 23 April 2026

Ca. 09.00–12.00, directly following the TRAIN summit. Venue: Norrköping, room and time schedule TBA (group seminars, approx. three hours)

Discussion of essays in groups (Coordinators: Jonas Andersson & Mats Eriksson)
