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**Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution of Higher Education
PEOPLES' FRIENDSHIP UNIVERSITY OF RUSSIA
RUDN University**

Faculty of Philology

educational division (faculty/institute/academy) as higher education programme developer

COURSE SYLLABUS

Contemporary issues in journalism and digital media

course title

Recommended by the Didactic Council for the Education Field of:

42.04.02 Journalism

field of studies / speciality code and title

The course instruction is implemented within the professional education programme of higher education:

Global and Digital Media

higher education programme profile/specialisation title

2026

1. OBJECTIVE OF THE DISCIPLINE

The aim of the course is to develop students' ability to critically analyse current developments, debates, and transformations in journalism and digital media. The course provides an advanced understanding of the technological, economic, political, social, cultural, and ethical factors shaping contemporary media systems and journalistic practices in different national and transnational contexts.

The main objectives are:

- to examine major contemporary trends and debates in journalism, digital media, and mass communication;
- to develop students' ability to critically assess changes in media production, distribution, consumption, and audience engagement;
- to explore the impact of digital platforms, algorithms, artificial intelligence, datafication, and automation on journalism and media industries;
- to analyse transformations in professional journalistic roles, newsroom practices, media business models, and relations with audiences;
- to examine current challenges related to media ethics, regulation, freedom of expression, misinformation, disinformation, privacy, and digital security;
- to develop students' ability to compare media developments across different countries, regions, and political and cultural contexts;
- to enhance students' skills in analysing current media cases, professional practices, research findings, and industry reports;
- to encourage evidence-based discussion and the formulation of well-supported arguments on emerging issues in journalism and digital media;
- to prepare students to identify and evaluate future challenges and opportunities in the rapidly changing global media environment.

2. REQUIREMENTS TO STUDENTS ON FINISHING THE COURSE

Students are expected to master the following competencies:

Table 2.1. The list of competencies formed in the mastering of the discipline (the results of the discipline)

Code	Competence	Indicators of competence achievement (within the discipline)
GPC-1	Able to plan, organize, and coordinate the process of creating media texts and/or media products demanded by society and industry, and (or) communication products, to monitor and take into account changes in Russian and foreign language norms and the peculiarities of other sign systems	GPC-1.1 Knows all stages and principles of media text production and/or media products and/or communication products
		GPC-1.2 Manages the process of preparing journalistic texts and/or products demanded by society and industry, taking into account changes in Russian (foreign) language norms and peculiarities of other sign systems
GPC-3	Able to analyze the diversity of achievements of domestic and world	GPC-3.1 Knows the stages and trends of the domestic and global cultural process

Code	Competence	Indicators of competence achievement (within the discipline)
	culture in the process of creating media texts and/or media products and/or communication products	GPC-3.2 Demonstrates diverse erudition in the field of national and world culture in the created journalistic texts and (or) products

3. THE DISCIPLINE (MODULE) IN THE STRUCTURE OF EP HE

The discipline “Contemporary issues in journalism and digital media” belongs to the Variative Module of Block 1 of the curriculum. Table 1 shows preceding and subsequent subjects aimed at forming competence discipline in accordance with the matrix of competencies.

Table 3.1. The list of components of the EP HE, contributing to the achievement of the planned results of the discipline

Code	Name of competence	Previous discipline	Subsequent disciplines
GPC-1	Able to plan, organize, and coordinate the process of creating media texts and/or media products demanded by society and industry, and (or) communication products, to monitor and take into account changes in Russian and foreign language norms and the peculiarities of other sign systems	Modern media systems / Современные медиасистемы	Research practice / Научно-исследовательская практика MA Qualification Thesis / Выпускная квалификационная работа
GPC-3	Able to analyze the diversity of achievements of domestic and world culture in the process of creating media texts and/or media products and/or communication products	Journalism as socio-cultural phenomenon / Журналистика как социокультурный феномен Modern media text / Современный медиатекст Intercultural communication / Межкультурная коммуникация	Photojournalism / Фотожурналистика Art and culture journalism / Журналистика культуры и искусства Research practice / Научно-исследовательская практика MA Qualification Thesis / Выпускная квалификационная работа

4. THE SCOPE OF THE DISCIPLINE AND TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

The overall workload of the discipline is **6** credits.

Table 4.1. Types of educational work by periods of study of the EP HE for the full-time mode of study

Type of activity	TOTAL, ac. hours	Semester (s)			
		1	2	3	4
<i>Classroom activities, ac. hours</i>	51	17	17	17	
Including:					
Lectures					
Laboratory activities					

Type of activity		TOTAL, ac. hours	Semester (s)			
			1	2	3	4
<i>Practical lessons/Seminars</i>		51	17	17	17	
<i>Independent work, ac. hours</i>		138	46	46	46	
<i>Control, ac. hours</i>		27	9	9	9	
Overall workload	ac. hours	216	72	72	72	
	credits	6	2	2	2	

5. CONTENT OF THE DISCIPLINE

Table 5.1 Content of the discipline (module) by type of activity

Name of the Unit	Content of the Units (topics)	Type of activity
Semester 1. Transformations of Contemporary Journalism and Media Systems Unit 1. Journalism in a Changing Media Environment	- Journalism as a profession and a social institution in the contemporary media environment; - Transformation of the functions and social roles of journalism; - Changing professional identities and responsibilities of journalists; - New competencies required in digital and convergent newsrooms; - Journalistic authority, professional standards, and relations with other media actors.	Practical lessons/Seminars
Unit 2. Transformation of Media Production and Distribution	- Media convergence and the transformation of newsroom organisation; - Multimedia, cross-media, and transmedia content production; - Adaptation of media content for different platforms and formats; - Platform-mediated distribution of journalistic content; - Continuous publishing, real-time reporting, and changes in the news cycle.	Practical lessons/Seminars
Unit 3. Contemporary Audiences and Media Consumption	- Changing patterns of media use and news consumption; - Fragmentation, segmentation, and diversification of media audiences; - Participatory journalism and user-generated content; - Audience engagement, interaction, and community-building practices; - Public trust in journalism and media institutions.	Practical lessons/Seminars
Semester 2. Digital Platforms, Data, and Emerging Technologies Unit 4. Platformisation of Journalism and Digital Media	- Digital platforms as intermediaries in the contemporary media system; - Platform dependency and its impact on media organisations; - Algorithmic selection, ranking, and personalisation of media content; - Social media, news aggregators, search engines, and messaging platforms;	Practical lessons/Seminars

Name of the Unit	Content of the Units (topics)	Type of activity
	- The creator economy, influencers, and platform-native media.	
Unit 5. Datafication, Metrics, and Audience Analytics	- Datafication of media production, distribution, and consumption; - Audience analytics and data-driven editorial decision-making; - Key performance indicators and methods of measuring audience engagement; - The influence of metrics on editorial priorities and content strategies; - Ethical issues related to audience tracking, profiling, and personal data.	Practical lessons/Seminars
Unit 6. Artificial Intelligence and Automation in Journalism	- Applications of artificial intelligence in journalism and media production; - Automated content production, transcription, translation, and personalisation; - Generative artificial intelligence in research, writing, editing, and visual communication; - Risks associated with inaccuracy, bias, opacity, copyright, and technological dependence; - Principles of responsible, transparent, and accountable use of artificial intelligence.	Practical lessons/Seminars
Semester 3. Professional, Ethical, and Social Challenges Unit 7. Misinformation, Disinformation, and Information Disorder	- Concepts and forms of misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, and propaganda; - Mechanisms of production and dissemination of misleading content; - Verification of claims, sources, images, videos, and user-generated content; - Fact-checking practices and verification workflows in digital newsrooms; - Media literacy and strategies for strengthening public resilience to manipulation.	Practical lessons/Seminars
Unit 8. Ethics, Regulation, and Accountability in Digital Media	- Contemporary ethical dilemmas in journalism and digital communication; - Privacy, public interest, trauma, discrimination, and vulnerable sources; - Freedom of expression and the regulation of digital media; - Platform responsibility and moderation of digital content; - Professional, corporate, legal, and public mechanisms of media accountability.	Practical lessons/Seminars
Unit 9. Sustainability and Future Development of Journalism	- Contemporary media business models and sources of journalism funding; - Economic sustainability and editorial independence; - Innovation, experimentation, and entrepreneurship in journalism; - Emerging technological, professional, and	Practical lessons/Seminars

Name of the Unit	Content of the Units (topics)	Type of activity
	social trends in digital media; - Evidence-based analysis of current and future developments in journalism and digital media.	

6. MATERIAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT OF THE DISCIPLINE

The discipline is implemented using e-learning and distance learning technologies

Table 6.1. Material and technical support of the discipline

Type of classroom	Classroom equipment	Specialized educational/laboratory equipment, software and materials for the mastering of the discipline (if necessary)
Computer classroom	A classroom is equipped with a computer, TV VCR and a transparency projector. CD players and DVD players are available upon request.	The computer has to be equipped with licensed and up-to-date software. Each computer has broadband Internet access. All computers are connected to RUDN University corporate computer network and are located in a single domain.

** The classroom for students' independent work **MUST be indicated!***

7. EDUCATIONAL AND METHODOLOGICAL AND INFORMATIONAL SUPPORT OF THE DISCIPLINE

Main readings:

- Franklin B., Eldridge II S. A. (eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Digital Journalism Studies*. – London; New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Nielsen R. K., Ganter S. A. *The Power of Platforms: Shaping Media and Society*. – New York: Oxford University Press, 2022.
- Napoli P. M. *Social Media and the Public Interest: Media Regulation in the Disinformation Age*. – New York: Columbia University Press, 2019.
- Thurman N., Lewis S. C., Kunert J. (eds.). *Algorithms, Automation, and News: New Directions in the Study of Computation and Journalism*. – London; New York: Routledge, 2021.

Other recommended readings:

- Carlson M. *Journalistic Authority: Legitimizing News in the Digital Era*. – New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.
- Whittaker J. P. *Tech Giants, Artificial Intelligence, and the Future of Journalism*. – London; New York: Routledge, 2019.
- Tumber H., Waisbord S. (eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Media Disinformation and Populism*. – London; New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Biswal S. K., Kulkarni A. J. *Exploring the Intersection of Artificial Intelligence and Journalism: The Emergence of a New Journalistic Paradigm*. – New Delhi: Routledge India, 2024.
- Eldridge II S. A., Franklin B. (eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of Developments in Digital Journalism Studies*. – London; New York: Routledge, 2019.
- Ferrucci P., Eldridge II S. A. *The Institutions Changing Journalism: Barbarians Inside the Gate*. – London; New York: Routledge, 2022.

Web-sites and online resources:

1. ЭБС РУДН и сторонние ЭБС, к которым студенты университета имеют доступ на основании заключенных договоров: [УНИБЦ \(НБ\) РУДН \(rudn.ru\)](http://ybib.ru)
2. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism – research reports and analytical materials on digital news, journalism, audiences, platforms, and media innovation
3. UNESCO – reports, recommendations, and educational resources on journalism, freedom of expression, media development, artificial intelligence, and disinformation
4. International Center for Journalists – professional resources, reports, and case studies on journalism innovation and digital transformation
5. New Media & Society – academic journal focusing on the social, political, cultural, and economic dimensions of digital media
6. Databases and search systems:
 - <https://www.researchgate.net/>
 - [Publons](#)
 - [Directory of Open Access Journals – DOAJ](#)
 - [JURN : search millions of free academic articles, chapters and theses](#)
 - [Digital Library Of The Commons \(indiana.edu\)](#)
 - Bloom Consulting Country Brand Ranking - <http://www.bloom-consulting.com/en/country-brands-ranking>
 - The Country Brand Index (CBI) - <http://www.futurebrand.com/think/reports-studies/cbi/2012-2/overview/>
 - Nation Brands Index - <http://www.simonanholt.com/Research/research-introduction.aspx>

Teaching materials for students' independent work while mastering the discipline/module:*

1. A course of lectures on the discipline.
2. Practical assignments and their brief contents;
3. Questions for self-check, test assignments.

* - all educational and methodical materials for students' independent work are published in accordance with the current order on the page of the discipline in TUIS!

8. GRADING MATERIALS AND GRADING-RATING SYSTEM FOR ASSESSING THE LEVEL OF COMPETENCE FORMED IN THE DISCIPLINE

The grading materials and grading-rating system* for assessing the level of competence (part of competences) for the discipline are presented in the Appendix to this Working program of the discipline.

* - are formed on the basis of the requirements of the corresponding local normative act of RUDN University.