

# Course-description 2021

## Capita Selecta Journalism for change

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Communication, Philosophy and Technology  
Group  
CPT  
Hollandseweg 1  
6706 KN Wageningen

<b>Course-code:</b>	CPT-54303
<b>ECTS:</b>	3
<b>Coordinator and teacher(s):</b>	Dr. Katharine Legun (coordinator) Dr. Auke Pols Dr. Bram Büscher
<b>Secretariat:</b>	Cathelijne Goossens room 4034, tel. 484310
<b>Period:</b>	5 & 6
<b>Time and Place</b>	Lectures Tuesday evenings, 17:30 - 19:00 Online  Group work Flexible scheduling



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## 1. Outline of the course and contents

The world around us is a constant *work in progress*. Societies have always been faced with fundamental challenges, but the scale at which contemporary problems occur is arguably much greater. Right now, our globalized world is facing several societal crises at multiple levels. Climate and ecological crises, ravaging inequality, food insecurity, wars and violent conflicts, health crises are all happening simultaneously and in ways that are often related. This course is not intended to find technical or policy-related solutions to these complex challenges, but to learn how to effectively communicate about problems to support informed and democratic decision-making.

Scientists tend to be very active in publishing (arguably complicated and lengthy) papers in journals and books that rarely make it to the bestselling lists. On the other hand, mass media and other journalistic media outlets, who arguably shape the public opinion, often avoid or oversimplify important issues. This course aims to tackle this disparity by actively stimulating students of a wide variety of disciplines to engage in communicating about societal challenges in a journalistic way. We wish to provide hands-on training for interested students with teaching and advice from experts from the field, informed by academic underpinning facilitated by lecturers from WUR.

This course will address the following questions:

- What is (investigative) science and environmental journalism?
- What should be communicated and how?
- What audiences should and can be addressed?
- How does social media and the intentional circulation of misleading information effect democracy and engagement with media?
- How do we ensure credibility (integrity and transparency) in communication?
- How is neutrality handled in journalism?
  - What do we want to communicate and to whom?
  - Is there a debate? If yes, how do you address differing perspectives?
- A large part of the population reads the big print newspapers (NOS, Trouw, NRC etc.) but more and more different ways/forms of communicating with audiences have emerged, such as:
  - Podcasts
  - Social media; including Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube

How has this changed the information circulation landscape?

Is there even this one thing called information anymore? Or merely opinions and perspectives?

## 2. Learning outcomes

After successful completion of this course students are expected to be able to:

- A. understand and explain the paradigm shift from linear to more interactional and performative models of communication, media, and journalism
- B. understand and explain the relationship between science communication in journalistic forms and democracy
- C. understand and explain different types and modes of journalism and their significance for complex societal issues
- D. assess how ethical considerations can be taken up in science communication, journalism and change communication and apply them
- E. apply the insights gained in this course to a societal challenge, taken from the student's fields of interest in realms such as environmental degradation, human-nature relationship, health, nutrition, life sciences and socio-ecological transformations, and produce a scientifically and technically sound piece of journalistic media intended for a public audience

### 3. Course structure and themes

The course will include:

- Lectures with theoretical and practical input
- Analysis and critique of popular Dutch and international media
- Writing workshops with “experts from the field”
- Short group assignments
- Peer review and collective workshopping of individual assignment

Lectures/workshops and group work will be alternated weeks, so that one week will have a lecture and the following week will include a group work assignment. Lectures will be scheduled for the evening (17:30-19:00) on Tuesdays in Periods 5 and 6 in 2021.

Lectures will be led by teaching staff at WUR, and workshops will be led by the course coordinator and invited practitioners from outside the university. The group work can be scheduled flexibly to accommodate students’ schedules. During the first group work meeting on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, students will get into groups and develop a meeting schedule and communication plan, and will self-organise meetings afterwards. Each group task, however, will receive input during the lectures and information via Brightspace. If the group would like any resources to support the group work, such as physical meeting spaces or access to online classrooms, please send a request to Katharine.

Prospective schedule (Break May 3 – 10)		
Dates	Topic	Lecturer/guest speaker
16/3	Lecture: Introduction to the course & the relationship between science, communication, and democracy	Dr. Katharine Legun
23/3	Groupwork: Develop groups, choose group assignment topic, and evaluate media communication around that topic from the perspective of democratic principles in science offered in the first lecture. Develop meeting schedule and request any necessary support (Group assignment)	
30/3	Lecture: Ethics in science communication	Dr. Auke Pols
5/4-9/4	Groupwork: Critically analyse a media communication from an ethical perspective related to your group topic. Hand in a 2-page discussion of media related to your group topic from the perspective of democratic principles and ethics. (Group assignment)	
13/4	Workshop: tips and tricks, radio	Dr. Lemke Kraan Radio journalist and lecturer at University of Groningen
19/4-23/4	Groupwork: Develop a preliminary topic for your individual assignment and a research strategy. Discuss and workshop it with your group. Hand in outline for feedback. (Individual assignment)	
27/4	Workshop	TBD
Break 3/5 – 7/5		

10/5 – 14/5	Groupwork: Begin doing research for your individual assignment. Discuss potential challenges to your research and reporting, and any ethical considerations. (Individual assignment)	
18/5	Workshop: Methods and strategies for online reporting	Wester van Gaal, De Correspondent
24/5-28/5	Groupwork: Develop the concept for the communication format for your topic, draft up a brief proposal, and workshop it with your group. (Individual assignment)	
1/6	Workshop. Hand in draft of proposal (1 page max). This should include a brief introduction to the topic, justification for communication format, and any ethical considerations. The Jester will run a workshop related to your work (Individual Assignment)	The Jester
7/6-11/6	Groupwork: Circulate written progress on your individual assignment, workshop in groups and provide critical feedback.	
15/6	Lecture: The economic politics of media and the production of knowledge	Dr Bram Büscher
21/6-25/6	Groupwork: Discuss media and access to forms of media as it relates to your group topic. Draft up 2 pages describing your assessment	
29/6	Course wrap-up Individual and group assignment due 2/7	Dr Katharine Legun

#### 4. Assessment and assignments

##### Assignments

- Group assignment (50%):
  - Group along themes of interest
  - Collectively produce a short critical assessment of a media communication. The critical assessment should consider the democratic aspects of media on your topics, ethical considerations related to your topic, the role of new media, and the ways that media discussions of your topic may be influenced by access to media.
- Individual assignment (50%)
  - This can cover a topic of your choosing, and use any form of journalistic media communication.
  - Students can submit their completed assignment to the Jester for publication. An issue of the Jester, an independent, student-driven publication at Wageningen
  - When handing in your assignment, include the proposal that describes your topic, justification of the approach, and any ethical considerations. This can be 1-2 pages.