

# **Syllabus**

## Introduction to Alternative Media

Author: Alexey Nikolov (anikolov@hse.ru)  
Department of Media

### **1. Course Description**

#### a) Pre-requisites

Fluent command of English, both oral and written.

Basic knowledge of history, geography, politics etc.

Sufficient skills in researching for information and preparing presentations.

#### b) Abstract

The pivotal idea of this course is mastering the skill of spotting the facts and ideas that are widely available but which most people miss, and analyzing them in an independent and unbiased manner.

This is a skill which would be helpful for just any professional, but it is of special importance for a news journalist in the Web 2.0 era.

The course is designed for both native and non-native English speakers.

### **2. Learning Objectives**

The students will get training in spotting and debunking stereotypes and clichés that exist, mostly unwitnessed, both in published news and in everyday life.

### **3. Learning Outcomes**

The students will be able to tell the mainstream approach to news from an alternative one, and to apply critical approach to various types and formats of information they receive.

### **4. Course Plan**

- What's "mainstream" news and how it is different from "alternative"
- Why and how the mankind has come to the concept of paying for information
- How did the formats of delivering the information to mass consumer evolve over the centuries
- The key difference between "the old news" and "the new news" – a 24/7 vs 86400/7 concept
- How often do we come across clichés, stereotypes and shibboleths in our everyday lives – and how to spot them
- Methods used by mass media to influence our perception of the news they report

- How technics aimed at influencing perception and manipulating people's minds, like gaslighting, are used to influence the news consumer
- The difference between “not a lie” and “the truth”
- Brief history and concept of licensing, compliance and censorship
- Examples of various alternative authors and news outlets

## **5. Reading List**

Students are expected to constantly follow the news from available sources

## **6. Grading System**

The final mark will consist of: Attendance – 25%; involvement and interim tasks – 25%; final work – 50%

## **7. Examination Type**

A presentation before the class and invited guests on a topic chosen together with the lecturer.

## **8. Methods of Instruction**

Full-time

## **9. Special Equipment and Software Support (if required)**

The students need any device with an internet access and a type of keyboard that is sufficient for them to write texts, when necessary.

The process of becoming an expert news producer begins with becoming an expert news consumer. This course provides a new look at the past and present of mass communication, teaches students how to compare news from different sources; how to spot and debunk clichés, stereotypes and other information traps that are hidden both in everyday life and in many news outlets.

The students who complete the course successfully will be prepared to work as news journalists in the modern news media in various capacities (editor, producer, correspondent, blogger, anchor). They should develop independent thinking and impartial approach to news, possess the ability to find and debunk clichés and stereotypes in the news agenda. They will have expertise in searching for information on the Web and verifying its authenticity. They will have proper understanding of modern tools used to search for information and present it, like data journalism, visualization techniques and the like. They will obtain basic habits of filming and video editing.

Through the course students will be given intermediate tests in the form of essays and short presentations.

The final examination will consist of preparing a presentation on how a particular real news item was covered by the mainstream media, juxtaposing it to a possible alternative coverage, and defending it before the class and invited guests.