

CORE MODULES: BA (Hons) Media Studies

You must take modules worth 120 credits at each level of the course. Each module is worth a specified number of credits.

Year one for full-time students (Level 4)

Media, Culture and Society (15 credits)

- This module provides you with an overview of common approaches to media, including theories of media and culture, and the broader issues and questions that have traditionally concerned media theorists. You will discuss various media forms and be introduced to theories of ideology, semiotics and myth, cultural studies, industry structures and issues of representation in different media forms. The module explores how information is presented through the media and how meanings are generated. You will consider the extent to which media both respond to and impact upon the larger culture and in that process, investigate the relationships between media, culture and society. Key theoretical frameworks to be used include: mass society and mass communication; ideology and discourse; the political economy; representation in relation to ethnicity, class, nation, gender and sexuality; and modernity and post-modernity. Throughout this module, you will acquire the essential knowledge of the field, enabling you to make informed choices of other, more specialised modules. In addition, you will develop the skills to write critical essays. Research skills, including literature searches and referencing techniques, are introduced. For assessment, you will produce two 750-word summaries of readings across the semester and a 1,500-word essay as a final assignment.*

Introduction to Radio and Audio Production (15 credits)

- This practice module provides a basis for the development of a radio portfolio and a grounding for further study in radio. It is a pre-requisite for the Level 5 modules Radio Production and Independent Radio Practice. The module addresses the relationship between theory and practice in radio production through studying and discussing different programme genres and treatments in a range of UK radio stations and networks: public service (BBC), commercial, community, student. The relationship between radio products and audiences is emphasised. Students are encouraged to relate academic theory to the practice of radio production and to the context of radio as a media product. The module teaches and practises the core skills of radio production, with particular focus on research, basic interviewing, scriptwriting and presenting. Technical competence is addressed and achieved through learning and practising skills in recording original audio files on portable recorders and in using specialist on-screen edit software. The module familiarises students with programme treatments that include news and current affairs in order to introduce awareness of fundamental journalistic principles. Students are taught how the requirements of writing for speech on radio differ from writing for print media or for academic study. Students write short radio scripts which may be adapted from various published textual sources or may be based on original ideas. Submission for the 'Multiphase' element of assessed work consists of an individually produced radio item and a group-produced programme.*

Introduction to Video 1 (15 credits)

- This module introduces students to the language of film and video, from the point of view of a practitioner, through a series of briefs and exercises that investigate a number of principles regarding filmic conventions. The range of projects will encompass the investigation of principles such as: composition and lighting, shot/reverse-shot sequences, matching on action, the 180 degree rule, continuity editing, eye-line matching, the 'Kuleshov' effect, synch/non-synch sound, and the rhythmic editing of picture and sound. The purpose and outcome for each project brief is not necessarily aimed at students perfecting conventions - experimenting and gaining an understanding of how they work are just as significant. No prior technical experience of film and video is required. The module will incorporate inductions into: camera operation, sound recording and editing. Practical workshops on the module will be complemented by an address to a range of filmic conventions across various form and types of filmmaking, including narrative fiction, documentary and experimental work. In the process of pre-production and planning, students will be encouraged to develop and practise methods of visualising and notating ideas. There will be regular screenings of student's work in a critical forum, in order to gain the feedback of their peers and tutors. For the purposes of the summative assessment, students will submit a compilation of the exercises that they have undertaken.*

Researching Media (15 credits)

- *This module offers insights into the most common methodologies used to research media as well as the history of these approaches. The module will introduce you to media studies students to the complexity of the various approaches employed in the field as well as the advantages and disadvantages of various theories. In the course of this, you will deal with the dominant debates that inform research methodologies and outcomes. You will look at various approaches to analyse media texts and how media audiences have traditionally been conceptualised. The module aims specifically to help develop your abilities to employ research approaches. In the course of the module, you will be introduced to some of the history of media studies and the approaches that developed out of it. You will be encouraged to formulate your own research questions and test the usefulness of various approaches. For assessment, you will be giving group presentations during the semester and produce a 2,000 word essay to be handed in at the end of the semester.*

Theorising Popular Culture (15 credits)

- *The module surveys a range of theories of popular culture, familiarising students with key debates and issues in the study of popular culture. The module demonstrates how a range of theoretical approaches from the study of popular culture might illuminate and analyse specific media practices. To this end, the module applies key concepts and theories to a range of popular-cultural and media practices, including television, advertising and popular music. Throughout the module, students engage with major theoretical debates in the study of popular culture, and are encouraged to think critically about such debates, before applying them to specific media practices. Lectures and seminars explore a range of contested definitions of 'popular culture', and consider the role that popular cultural forms have played historically and in the contemporary context. The module considers whether popular culture provides people with a form of escapism from everyday life, or whether it engages critically with the everyday. In its address to popular cultural practices, the module will familiarise students with key theoretical perspectives in media studies, including Marxism, semiotics, feminism, psychoanalysis, critical 'race' studies, and postmodernism. The assessment will comprise a 2500 word critical essay on one of the key topics covered on the module.*

Media and Technology (15 credits)

- *This module is compulsory for students on the Media Studies course. The module explores how the introduction of new technologies transforms notions of space, place and times within which communication occurs. The module critically discusses a variety of theoretical positions concerning how we evaluate the role of technology within communicative practices. Throughout, communicative practices are situated within their specific historical periods. The cultural, social and political significance of the introduction of new forms of technologies on communicative practices is thus also addressed. Students participate in groups to give a 10-15 minute assessed presentation in class during the course of the module, addressing a specific topic relevant to the module content. Each student writes a 2000 word assessed critical essay.*

Introduction to Television Studies (15 credits)

- *Television as a medium is currently experiencing vast changes and shifts that increasingly force us to understand it as a medium available on multiple screens and in a variety of forms. This module covers a breadth of approaches to study this medium in transition. This module covers historical approaches to television, definitions of the medium, television as a technology, with a focus on the ancillary technologies that are included in our ideas of a television (VCR, DVD, Video-on-Demand), Television industry, textual analysis, including structuralist approaches to narrative structures, television aesthetics and television's relationship with postmodernism, television genre, audience and reception studies on television, transnational television, and television's relationship with contemporary politics. The module will enable students to analyse television critically and give them a broad overview of relevant theoretical approaches to analyse the medium. In this, it will consider television as a medium in flux, which increasingly shift towards Video-on-Demand and ask students to develop an idea of the medium in its complexity. The module is delivered in the form of lectures with a 1-hour screening slot to look at specific examples of television to analyse and 1-hour seminars. Viewing specific programmes together serves to get students to engage with known or unknown material critically and apply theories of television. Assessment will be one 500 word summary and critical evaluation of a relevant journal article and a 2,000 word essay at the end of the module. Students are assessed on their ability to engage critically with television theory and apply their knowledge to specific television or Video-on-Demand programmes.*

Introduction to Desktop Publishing (15 credits)

- This module is a pre-requisite for the Level 5 module Internet Communication and the Level 6 module Creative Publishing. It introduces students to the theory and practice of print media. In workshops the principles of desktop publishing, writing copy, and picture, text and graphics management are addressed. The module provides opportunities for the practical application of desktop publishing in producing small-scale publications, such as for leaflets, brochures, newsletters, magazines and newspapers. Students are introduced to methods of generating, researching and writing stories in a variety of different formats. They are encouraged to generate original material and to learn and gain competence in interviewing techniques. Throughout the module an emphasis is placed on design principles, headline and lead writing, writing to length, to deadlines, and using appropriate sources. A range of desktop publishing and graphics packages is used in the generation and manipulation of page, text and image. Issues of ethics, copyright and other legal requirements of work in the medium and in journalism are introduced. Similarly, issues of audience, distribution and reception are introduced. Students work to plan and produce a print media product. Through discussion with the module leader, students decide on the purpose of their product, its message and its target audience. Students submit for assessment a portfolio which contains the product, the proposal, all editorial copy and research material.*

Year two for full-time students (Level 5)

Web Design and Development (15 credits)

- In this module students explore, experiment with and develop skills in internet technology and web design. Techniques of interface, navigation and manipulation are applied to creative composition and to evolve small scale web based products. This involves the use of textual, graphic, moving image and audio material and their amalgamation into an internet product that serves a specific purpose for an identified client/audience. Students engage with the computer tools, software packages and terminology required for effective work in this medium and gain a working knowledge both of the strengths and the limits of the medium. Whilst there is some address to computer 'languages' the major emphasis is on using the internet for creative and professional purposes. Ethical issues, such as those to do with pornography and privacy are addressed as are those to do with copyright and libel. The impact of multimedia on communication in the broader techno-culture is also explored. Multimedia studio based sessions allow students to explore a range of selected internet sites and to assess critically the features which contribute to their aesthetic, their clarity of purpose, their ease of use and their mode of address to projected audiences. This module encourages students to reflect on professional practice in this medium. Students design a site and produce an application on disc. This is submitted for assessment along with a reflective commentary and evaluation of both process and product.*

Digital Media Theory (15 credits)

- Contemporary media culture is primarily a culture of the digital, mediated through digital computers, mobile communication devices and networks. This module introduces key themes and debates through which to understand digitality not only as a technical characteristic but a cultural phenomenon. The module develops an understanding of the characteristics specific to digital media culture and themes range from aesthetics to new forms of knowledge and communication. Key forms of recent digital media theory debates are introduced. Discussed themes can include game cultures, social media, digital aesthetics, mobile cultures, digital interfaces, human-computer interaction and software from a cultural perspective. For their assignment, students produce a lecture diary, which gives the possibility to reflect and summarize themes from lectures. The lecture diary is supported by a non - assessed formative seminar exercise where students have to prepare discussion topics for the seminar based on the lecture. In addition, an individual essay gives the opportunity to apply the theoretical skills to an analysis of a specific theme of digital culture. Students are expected to actively use Internet resources and modes of communication.*

TV Genres (15 credits)

- The study of television genre has shaped television studies in numerous ways. Most importantly, television genre offers a way to 'order' content for viewers and a way for television studies scholars to come to terms with the vast amount of content available on broadcast television or Video-on-Demand. As such, television genre is essential for developing an understanding of the medium. This module enables students to gain in-depth insights into the complexities and breadth involved in one of the central theoretical approaches to television. This module introduces students to a variety of ways to conceptualise television genre as well as discussing case studies that position genres within a broader field of cultural, social, political and industrial contexts. Specifically, this module will discuss structuralist, ideological and historical approaches to television genre, will explore the idea of genre as discourse, genre hybridity and postmodernism, more elusive, audience-led genres such as cult TV and look more specifically at case studies of genre. The case studies serve to illustrate to students the different means by which television genres can be studied. The module is delivered in the form of lectures with a 1-hour screening slot to look at specific examples of television to analyse and 1-hour seminars. Viewing specific programmes together serves to get students to engage with known or unknown material critically and apply theories of television. The module will be assessed with one 3000 word critical essay in which students are asked to research, define and analyse a television genre of their choice.*

Radio Production (15 credits)

- This practice module builds on the technical, editorial and production skills which students encountered in Introduction to Radio and which are required for work in the radio industry. Using specialist facilities for audio recording and for on-screen editing, students are taught to produce the short 'package' format which is a staple of the radio 'magazine programme' and is a widely used form of the feature genre. Good practice is demonstrated through the study of a variety broadcast examples which illustrate suitable subject matter for packages. Critical skills are encouraged and developed by class discussion and review of these. Skills involved in writing cues and links are developed further. Presenting skills are practised in relation to the need to use different overall treatments, depending on programme style and target audience. Skills in recording, editing and mixing audio material are consolidated and there is further consideration of the use of actuality, music and sound effects. The module includes basic study of media law with particular reference to defamation. The issue of using 'bad' language on radio programmes is discussed. The module encourages students to acquire skills needed for working in the media industry environment and a professional approach to time management is emphasised both in individual and team work. Radio products submitted for assessment include work produced individually and in production groups. A critical commentary and evaluation of the group product is also submitted for assessment.*

Online Journalism (15 credits)

- The module aims to develop your skills in web-based journalism and online media production using a range of online media formats. Through a series of topic led discussions, reading, class exercises and small project briefs you will examine the language and practice of new/digital media and reflect on its uses. Online Journalism is presented as a distinct practice involving the use of a variety of writing styles from multimedia content to interactive and social media. The course includes examples from factual and non-factual content and addresses a range of topics including fake/false news, blogging, vlogging, the rise of the image driven web, implications of media sharing, online communities, citizen journalism, personal online profile management, digital storytelling, working with images, building a freelance career.*

Teenage Kicks: Youth Culture (15 credits)

- The module is concerned with popular culture as defined, practised and consumed against and within 'official' or 'high' culture. It explores issues of identity, resistance and consumption, focusing on specific case studies, including, for example, subcultural practices and style. The relationships between taste, style and ideology are critically explored through an analysis of various sites and products, such as the shopping mall, popular musical forms, television, dress, eating, and leisure activities. Contemporary icons are addressed for what they are able to indicate about forms of resistance, diversity and identity. The social metaphors a cultural group may employ in terms of the spectacular and the public are considered against the more silent and private strategies of consumption involved in, for example, fashioning of the body and identity. The module thus deals with popular culture both on the terms in which it asserts itself and in the wider framework of a politics of pleasure and possibility, whilst also engaging with the question as to whether the scrutiny of the popular from within the academy may represent a form of populism. Students write a critical essay of 3,000 words to be submitted at the end of the semester.*

Non-Fiction Filmmaking (15 credits)

- *This module explores the nature and practice of documentary filmmaking. It addresses the aesthetics of documentary in relation to expository, poetic, observational, performative, participatory and reflexive modes of practice. Students are encouraged to consider, reflect and implement appropriate responses to the range of issues that might arise in their work, including: the ethical, creative, methodological, theoretical, and technical concerns that relate to documentary. Examples of contemporary, historical, independent, mainstream, television and film documentary are examined in detail to rationalise the subject of non-fiction film and video in terms of forms and conventions of documentary language. A range of work will be screened and discussed during the module, which provides a context for the student projects that are undertaken in small groups. The module begins with students being asked to make a number of concise introductory pieces that explore concepts and aesthetics concerning documentary and 'non-fiction' filmmaking. Students then pitch a more substantial project to the module tutors and seminar group, followed by feedback and further discussion of ethical, creative and practical issues raised by each proposal. Groups should then produce a shooting script and production schedule making sure to gain all permission from interviewees, copyright and location owners, prior to filming. The module tutors will oversee the production and editing processes, and require to see students for group tutorials. A critical review of the finished films is conducted in week 12. Students must submit all the preparatory and planning documentation for the documentary film production as well as an individual critical commentary and evaluation.*

Digital Media Practice and Creative Computing (15 credits)

- *This module introduces students to practical work in digital media environments, allowing them to apply and expand knowledge gained in the Digital Media Theory module. Through instruction, hands-on tutorials, and self-directed, project-based exploration, students will familiarise themselves with the area of creative computing, which has become centrally important in the contemporary landscape of computational culture. In doing so, students will learn to use a number of digital tools and acquaint themselves with the basics of code-based expression, programming, and algorithmic logic. Introductions to visual programming, object-oriented programming, live coding, physical computing, and interactive storytelling will allow students to familiarise themselves with important skills, issues, and implications of computational culture. The contexts for these explorations will include video game design, basic robotics, graphical animation, the 'Internet of things,' and electronic sound. Students will learn to understand and build simple electronic circuits, and write basic programs for generating and controlling, image, and interactivity. They will also explore how this knowledge relates to the designing of interactive narratives, such as those found in videogames. Through short lectures and group discussion, insights will be contextualised with material from the Digital Media Theory module. In the second half of the term, each student will choose a digital platform they wish to explore in more detail, and design an individual creative project to be carried out using this platform. This project, which can build on any of the topics explored in the module, should be finished by the end of the term, and will be accompanied by a written discussion of the project's design and execution process, as well as its critical implications.*

Final year for full-time students (Level 6)

Undergraduate Major Project (30 credits)

- *The individual Major Project module allows students to engage in a substantial piece of individual research, focused on a topic relevant to their specific course. The project topic will be assessed for suitability to ensure sufficient academic challenge and satisfactory supervision by an academic member of staff. The chosen topic will require the student to identify/formulate problems and issues, conduct literature and other appropriate media reviews, evaluate information, process data, critically appraise and present their findings. Regular meetings with the project supervisor should take place, so that the project is closely monitored and steered in the right direction. The assessment will be in the form of a written dissertation.*

Media Law, Culture and Technology (15 credits)

- *This module examines legal issues surrounding the creation, use, consumption, and circulation of digital artefacts. Focussing on intellectual property rights, we will consider the legal implications of creative, educational, commercial, and private activities in contemporary British and international contexts of digital culture. This module provides a detailed survey of copyright, trademark and patent law with a special emphasis on how they apply to digital media. The module also reviews the law of contract as it applies to work in the culture industries. Further regulatory topics related to intellectual property issues, regarding telecommunications and broadcasting law, are also investigated from a British as well as an international perspective. Among the questions we will encounter are the following: What assistance does the law offer in the protection of information and digital property? Are the restrictions intellectual property law imposes on our ability to copy and reuse fair? Is the Internet – considered as a marketplace, creative realm, and sphere of political speech – a space of freedom and democracy? What are the privacy, property, and security implications of 'living in the cloud'? Assessment for this module is by way of a weekly Lecture Diary (coursework, 30%) and a final essay (coursework, 70%), for which a number of topic choices are available.*

Contemporary Television (15 credits)

- *This module focuses on contemporary television, exploring a range of different genres, including drama, comedy and 'reality' shows. Specific programmes will be explored and analysed in screenings and seminars. These programmes are examined not simply as texts but as specific examples around which larger areas of debate and discussion (including, for example, genre, feminism, the representation of family, etc.) can be explored. The wider context in which these programmes are situated (e.g. technology, institution, audience and the changing context of television) will also be explored. Students' research and writing skills are refined through an assessed study of a popular television show of their choice. Students are assessed on the basis of their ability to apply theoretical ideas and debates to a close study of individual programmes. Assessment consists of a 500 word reception study that analyses a cross section of reviews of a television programme and a 2500 word critical essay. Possible programmes for discussion include: Interruptions, The Singing Detective, Twin Peaks, Mad Men, Curb Your Enthusiasm, Modern Family, American Idol, X Factor, The Wire, Borgen, Buffy, Firefly, Dr. Who, Girls, Six Feet Under, End Piece, True Blood, Dexter, Girls, Homeland, Lark Rise to Candleford, Call the Midwife.*

Independent Film Practice 1 (15 credits)

- *This module is an opportunity for students to develop their own mode of creative film/video practice. Whether students' projects are informed by considerations associated with narrative drama, documentary, animation or experimental work, they are expected to show a critical and reflective attitude towards their practice. Early in the module students present project proposals to tutors and the rest of the group. The Module Tutors will assess the nature of students' project proposals in terms of their merits and practicalities. At a later stage students will be required to show and discuss their work in progress in the context of individual tutorials, and class seminars. There is a strong emphasis on the development of the proposed project through preliminary practical projects, research, pre-production and the open discussion of ideas. Advanced technical workshops will be organised for students as required. Students can work individually or in small groups. On completion of the module there is a screening and crit. At the crit. every student is expected to show at least one finished piece of work. Students who are continuing on to Independent Film Practice 2 should conceive of the film that they produce in this module as a foundation for the work that they intend to undertake in the second semester. In addition, every student also submits a commentary and evaluation, which discusses the intentions behind their project and the formative features of the work. Assessment is via the presentation of the student's project (worth 80%) and a 1,000-word Commentary and Evaluation.*

Independent Film Practice 2 (15 credits)

- *The projects that students propose to undertake in this module should draw on the strengths of the work made in Independent Film Practice 1, developing a particular method of working, or honing a specific approach to practice - whether that is in the context of narrative drama, documentary, animation or an experimental mode. In this respect, students are also encouraged to consider the wider context of their work. The first few weeks of the module will comprise conceptual workshop projects that encourage students to think critically, through practice, and re-examine concepts associated with the fundamental aesthetics of film and video. These projects will also encourage students to develop their project proposals by way of showing and discussing specific images, sounds and their combination. Student Presentations and Work in Progress screenings follow the initial workshop projects, and for the most part the content of module will be led by the discussion of issues and concepts that arise in relation to students' projects. The progress of these projects is addressed in detail throughout the semester in the context of seminars and individual or group tutorials with staff from across the department. A guest lecture by a visiting filmmaker will also be a key element. The final projects are presented in a crit at the end of the semester. In addition, students submit an essay that should address their work in relation to the cultural, historical and*

aesthetic context in which they situate it. Students on this module will also be encouraged to assist in organising the final end of year screening. This usually takes place at the Arts Picture House. Staff will oversee the project, but students are centrally involved in writing copy, designing posters and compiling the work. By the end of the module students should also have made their work ready for distributing to film and video festivals. Assessment is via presentation and submission of project (worth 80%) and a 1,000-word Commentary and Evaluation (20%).

Creative Publishing (15 credits)

- *This module provides a reflective environment in which techniques of electronic publishing are applied to writing originating within the module, selected from the student's broader portfolio or via a commission. It is expected that, in this module, students are able to draw on their learning experiences in a range of other modules where issues concerning the relationships between information technologies, the processes of globalization and emergent forms of communicative practices have been discussed. Students research and produce a design plan suitable for directing the production of a published document from initial thumbnail sketches through to finished product. Appropriate computer tools as well as software are experimented with as aids to creative practice in this medium. Techniques deployed include those to do with the generation of information, its storage and transfer; copy editing, proof reading and production. Consideration is given to such questions as house style within the broader context of message and audience and the impact of diverse and developing technology on the reproduction of writing in paper based media. In the latter instance regard is given to networks of communication which see institutions such as the publishing house as stations rather than significant termini. Students engage critically with a range of case studies from, for example, underground literature, magazines, photographic journals and artistic showcases. Issues of audience, distribution, copyright and other relevant legal and ethical concerns are addressed. In the process of producing work of publishable standard for assessment students practice and develop project management skills and portfolio presentation skills. The portfolio of work produced is submitted for assessment, ideally in electronic form. A commentary on and evaluation of process and product is also submitted. Here, students are also encouraged to draw on their learning from other modules.*

Working in English and Media (15 credits)

- *This module provides a specific focus on work experience activity for students of English, Communication, Film and Media, in preparation for targeted entry into professional occupations in the domain of multi-media, film, TV, cinema, radio, video, teaching, publishing, arts administration and related creative and cultural industries. Students identify, negotiate and carry out a work placement, or produce a commissioned product, in a chosen area, with guidance from the relevant course leader and module leader. Ongoing consultation, supervision and support are provided by the course and module leader in association with the Campus Careers Service. Once agreed by the student, the employer, the relevant course leader and the module leader, the work placement is undertaken in a series or block of hours. In the case of a commission, students draw up a detailed proposal in consultation with the external client or agency involved and the designated project supervisor. Students bring a critical and theoretical address to bear on their work experience or commission, which, together with the experience itself, affords a means of strengthening a planned and reflective approach to the nature, advantages and constraints of particular work opportunities, as well as to students' own aptitudes and interests. This includes an address to job search, application and selection processes. The knowledge and the range of course-specific, transferable and vocationally oriented skills developed during the course are enumerated and articulated, most particularly in the refinement of the developing portfolio and the critical essay, both of which are submitted at the end of the semester. The portfolio should include: CV; copies of a range of academic work (including a DVD showreel where appropriate); evidence of extra-curricular activities; evidence of work experience. Presentation is crucial and students should make use of all available multi-media in refining their work. There are no designated pre-requisites for this module but you must have previously attained credits that enable you to meet the demands of the specific placement and to bring a critical and theoretical address to bear. This module forms part of the ongoing programme of Personal Development Planning.*