PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Course record information

Name and level of final award	**MA Social Media, Culture and Society** The MA Social Media, Culture and Society is a Master's degree that is Bologna FQ-EHEA second cycle degree or diploma compatible.
Name and level of intermediate awards	Postgraduate Diploma Social Media, Culture and Society Postgraduate Certificate Social Media, Culture and Society
Awarding body/institution	University of Westminster
Teaching Institution	University of Westminster
Status of awarding body/institution	Recognised Body
Location of delivery	Harrow campus
Language of delivery and assessment	English
Mode, length of study and normal starting month	One year full time, two years part time day/evening. September start.
QAA subject benchmarking group(s)	The following documents have been consulted: 'Subject Benchmark Statement: Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies' (October 2016) www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/SBS-Communication-Media-Film-and-Cultural-Studies-16.pdf; 'Characteristics Statement: Master's Degree' (September 2015) www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Masters-Degree-Characteristics-15.pdf.
Professional statutory or regulatory body	N/A
Date of course validation/review	2018
Date of programme specification approval	December 2018
Valid for cohorts	2019-20
Course Leader	Professor Graham Meikle
Course URL	westminster.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate
Westminster course code	PMJMC13F (FT) PMJMC13P (PT)
JACS code	100440 Digital Media
UCAS code	P051161

Admissions requirements

There are standard minimum [entry requirements](#) for all postgraduate courses. Students are advised to check the standard requirements for the most up-to-date information.

For most courses a decision will be made on the basis of your application form alone. However, for some courses the selection process may include an interview to demonstrate your strengths in addition to any formal entry requirements.

More information can be found here: westminster.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/how-to-apply

Aims of the course

The MA Social Media, Culture and Society has been designed to develop a critical understanding of contemporary networked digital media. Social media have challenged how we understand communication, democracy, news, relationships, privacy, advertising and entertainment. Social media have captured the attention and imagination of hundreds of millions of people. They enable their users to develop and display their creativity, to empathize with others, and to find connection, communication and communion. But social media have also captured those users' personal information, and turned their daily lives into commercial data through business models built around surveillance.

This MA degree develops an advanced and in-depth knowledge of contemporary digital media and communication through systematic study. It offers the social science and humanities expertise of Westminster's world-leading Communication and Media Research Institute (CAMRI). The course examines social media as industries and as central sites for understanding the cultural politics of everyday life. It explores the meanings of sharing and privacy, of remix cultures and new forms of journalism, of new forms of communication and new forms of citizenship. It connects social media to other digital phenomena such as the internet of things, Big Data, and media convergence. In its core modules, learners engage with questions of media technologies and texts, of platforms and users, and of how networked digital media are adopted and adapted in an environment built around the convergence of personal and public communication. Option modules offer specialist emphases on: digital media and critical theory; on data and society; on political economy; on activism and politics; on news and journalism; and on globalization and communication. All learners will develop high-level skills in research, critical thinking and communication.

Employment and further study opportunities

Graduates of the MA Social Media, Culture and Society are able to work in a wide range of sectors and professions. The degree will benefit those seeking a competitive edge in a careers market that values high-level skills in communication, research and critical thinking. This degree will be of particular interest to those who plan to work in the creative industries, as well as those already working in this field. The MA Social Media, Culture and Society will also be of interest to students working in non-profit sectors, including NGOs and advocacy groups. It also provides an excellent preparation for those planning to continue their studies to PhD level. The MA Social Media Culture and Society places particular emphasis on those transferable skills that have always been central to an education in the humanities or social sciences: these are core skills in research and analysis, in critical thinking, and in communication; our graduates develop these to advanced levels, along with their knowledge and understanding of networked digital media and their social and cultural contexts. Graduates of this degree are informed, critical, adaptable, resourceful and creative. They are able to work both independently and collaboratively in roles that require advanced skills in finding, generating, analysing and communicating ideas and information, such as research, consultancy, administration and management.

Today's organisations need graduates with both good degrees and skills relevant to the workplace. The University of Westminster is committed to developing employable graduates by ensuring that:

- Career development skills are embedded in all courses
- Opportunities for part-time work, placements and work-related learning activities are widely available to students
- Staff continue to widen and strengthen the University's links with employers in all sectors, involving them in curriculum design and encouraging their participation in other aspects of the University's career education and guidance provision
- Staff are provided with up-to-date data on labour market trends and employers' requirements, which will inform the service delivered to students.

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes (LO) are statements on what successful students have achieved as the result of learning. These are threshold statements of achievement and are linked to the knowledge, understanding and skills that a student will have gained on successfully completing a course.

Knowledge and understanding

Upon completion of the MA in Social Media, Culture and Society course, successful students will be able to:

LO1: Demonstrate an advanced critical understanding of social media, including their business models, technological contexts and affordances, social impacts, and cultural habits.

LO2: Reflect critically upon the historical development of networked digital media.

LO3: Discuss, explain and evaluate key theories of media and communication.

LO4: Create critical insights into how social media are used in key social contexts.

LO5: Analyse and critically appraise public debates around networked digital media.

LO6: Apply critical perspectives on the relationships between communication technology and social change.

LO7: Demonstrate a critical understanding of a range of primary research methods for media and communication.

The core modules address these course learning outcomes as follows:

7MEDS010W Social Media LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4, LO5, LO6
7COMM013W Theories of Communication LO3, LO6
7MEDS009W Social Media Research Project: LO1, LO3, LO4, LO7

Specific skills

Upon completion of the MA in Social Media, Culture and Society course, successful students will be able to:

LO8: Demonstrate a critical understanding of social media tools and platforms through reflective practice.

LO9: Access and employ a range of learning resources for coursework and independent research activity.

LO10: Appraise and apply a range of primary research methods for media and communication.

LO11: Devise, design and conduct an original independent media research project.

The core modules address these course learning outcomes as follows:

7MEDS010W Social Media LO8, LO9
7COMM013W Theories of Communication LO9
7MEDS009W Social Media Research Project LO9, LO10, LO11

Key transferable skills

Upon completion of the MA in Social Media, Culture and Society course, successful students will be able to:

LO12: Work independently, taking responsibility for their own learning, problem solving, and time management.

LO13: Demonstrate and employ advanced skills in secondary research, using a range of approaches to retrieve, assess, appraise, evaluate and synthesise published research from a wide variety of resources.

LO14: Use advanced skills in critical and creative thinking through conducting, defending, appraising and evaluating arguments.

LO15: Write to an advanced standard in a range of different genres, such as essays, reports, blog posts and reviews.

LO16: Collaborate and participate effectively in group debate and discussion, including providing and responding to peer feedback.

LO17: Enhance and apply skills in preparing and delivering oral presentations.

The core modules address these course learning outcomes as follows:

7MEDS010W Social Media LO12, LO13, LO14, LO15, LO16
7COMM013W Theories of Communication LO12, LO13, LO14, LO15, LO16
7MEDS009W Social Media Research Project LO12, LO13, LO14, LO15, LO16, LO17

Learning, teaching and assessment methods

Learning:

Different modules engage students with different ways of learning, to help support a variety of learning styles and personal development. While the majority of teaching is conducted face-to-face, we also support our modules with online material through the University's Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment. This material may include practical examples,

technical support, key references, discussion groups and lecture notes. In addition, modules may make extensive use of a range of social media and other online platforms.

In-class contact time represents only a proportion of study for each module, and is part of a wider process of preparatory and follow-up reading and critical reflection by learners. The *out-of-class* independent study time is self-managed by learners, with guidance from academic staff, and offers scope for creative experimentation, exploration and the development of the autonomy required in professional life. This culminates in the capstone research project: each learner identifies their own area of research interest, about which they design, conduct and communicate the results of an independent critical enquiry into a question relevant to the themes and concerns of the degree.

Teaching:

Teaching methods on the course include:

Lectures: These are designed to give learners a general overview of the topic. Lectures identify the most important relevant ideas, and invite learners to explore these further through their reading.

Seminars: These are designed to encourage learners to discuss a topic, based on the lecture and their reading. Sometimes individual learners will be asked to introduce a specific topic in a seminar.

Social media as learning spaces: Core modules make extensive use of blogs and platforms such as YouTube as learning and teaching spaces, with learners encouraged to create content that reflects on ideas from their readings and lectures.

Presentations: These offer learners experience in presenting ideas and arguments concisely, familiarising them with the preparation and use of visual aids, and teaching them how to interact with an audience. In some modules individual presentations will be formally assessed for clarity of argument, evidence of reading and effectiveness of communication.

Individual reading: A list of recommended reading for each topic will be provided for each module. This reading list represents a basis for exploration of the subject and learners are encouraged to go beyond these reading lists and make connections with other material.

Assessment:

All assessment is of coursework; there are no exams. Learners produce a varied range of coursework for assessment, including essays, research reports, presentations, social media contributions such as blog posts, and group and individual creative projects.

Modules may include a piece of *formative* assessment. Learners receive feedback on this, but the assessment does not count towards their overall marks for the module. Rather, the purpose is to help them to learn and prepare for those assignments whose marks do count. Formative assessment is assessment *for* learning. Each module will also include between one and three pieces of *summative* assessment. Learners will receive feedback on this and the assessment will count towards their overall marks for the module. This is assessment *of* learning.

Course structure

This section shows the core and option modules available as part of the MA Social Media, Culture and Society course and their credit value. Full-time postgraduate students study 180 credits per year.

Credit Level 7				
Module code	**Module title**	**Status**	**UK credit**	**ECTS**
7MEDS010W	Social Media	Core	20	10
7COMM013W	Theories of Communication	Core	20	10
7MEDS009W	Social Media Research Project	Core	60	30
7MEDS004W	Digital Media and Critical Theory	Option	20	10
7BDIN008W	Data and Society 1	Option	20	10
7BDIN009W	Data and Society 2	Option	20	10
7COMM002W	Researching Media and Communication	Option	20	10
7MEST002W	Global Media	Option	20	10
7MEDS005W	Political Economy of Communication	Option	20	10
7MEDS015W	Media, Activism and Politics	Option	20	10
7JRNL016W	Sociology of News	Option	20	10
Learners may substitute *one* option module from this list with another relevant 20-credit level 7 module, if they receive permission from both their own course leader and the leader of the module that they wish to study.				

Please note: not all option modules will necessarily be offered in any one academic year.

Academic regulations

The current Handbook of Academic Regulations is available at westminster.ac.uk/academic-regulations

How will learners be supported in their studies?

Course management

This Master's course is led by Professor Graham Meikle, who has overall responsibility for coordinating the degree. Professor Meikle has been researching and teaching about digital media for 20 years, and has published books about social media, media convergence, internet activism, online news, and the internet of things. He teaches core modules every year. All modules are led by staff who are active researchers: this means that they are engaged in developing new knowledge in this field and are able to bring this perspective to their teaching. Each student is also allocated a personal tutor, who will meet with them throughout their course to discuss progress and provide guidance. The degree is part of a group of related courses in the College of Design, Creative and Digital Industries. The Dean of the College and other senior staff provide support and management, enhancing the specific role of the course leader. A course committee made up of staff and students meets at least once each semester, and all modules are monitored and reviewed regularly.

Academic support

Upon arrival, an induction programme will introduce you to the staff responsible for the course, the campus on which you will be studying, the Library and IT facilities, additional support available and to your School Registry Office. You will be provided with the Course Handbook, which provides detailed information about the course. Each course has a course leader or Director of Studies. All students enrolled on a full-time course and part time students registered for more than 60 credits a year have a personal tutor, who provides advice and guidance on academic matters. The University uses a Virtual Learning Environment called Blackboard where students access their course materials, and can communicate and collaborate with staff and other students

Learning support

The Academic Learning Development Centre supports students in developing the skills required for higher education. As well as online resources in Blackboard, students have the opportunity to attend Study Skills workshops and one to one appointments.

Learning support includes four libraries, each holding a collection of resources related to the subjects taught at that site. Students[1] can search the entire library collection online through the Library Search service to find and reserve printed books, and access electronic resources (databases, e-journals, e-books). Students can choose to study in the libraries, which have areas for silent and group study, desktop computers, laptops for loan, photocopying and printing services. They can also choose from several computer rooms at each campus where desktop computers are available with the general and specialist software that supports the courses taught in their School. Students can also securely connect their own laptops and mobile devices to the University wireless network.

Support services

The University of Westminster Student Affairs department provide advice and guidance on accommodation, financial and legal matters, personal counselling, health and disability issues, careers, specialist advice for international students and the chaplaincy providing multi-faith guidance. The University of Westminster Students' Union also provides a range of facilities to support students during their time at the University.

How do we ensure the quality of our courses and continuous improvement?

The course was initially approved by a University Validation Panel in 2013 and revalidated in 2018. The panels included internal peers from the University, academic(s) from another university, and a representative from industry. This helps to ensure the comparability of the course to those offered in other universities and the relevance to employers.

The course is also monitored each year by the College to ensure it is running effectively and that issues which might affect the student experience have been appropriately addressed. Staff will consider evidence about the course, including evidence of student achievement and the reports from external examiners, to evaluate the effectiveness of the course. Each College puts in to place an action plan. This may for example include making changes on the way the module is taught, assessed or even how the course is structured in order to improve the course, in such cases an approval process is in place.

A course revalidation takes place periodically to ensure that the curriculum is up-to-date and that the skills gained on the course continue to be relevant to employers. Students meet with

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[1] Students enrolled at Collaborative partners may have differing access due to licence agreements.

review panels to provide feedback on their experiences. Student feedback from previous years is also part of the evidence used to assess how the course has been running.

How do we act on student feedback?

Student feedback is important to the University and student views are taken seriously. Student feedback is gathered in a variety of ways.

- Through student engagement at Course/Module level, students have the opportunity to express their voice in the running of their course. Student representatives are elected to Committee to expressly represent the views of their peer. The University and the Students' Union work together to provide a full induction to the role of the student representatives.

- There are also School Staff Student Exchange meetings that enable wider discussions across the School. Student representatives are also represented on key College and university committees.

- All students are invited to complete a questionnaire before the end of each module. The feedback from this will inform the module leader on the effectiveness of the module and highlight areas that could be enhanced.

- The University also has an annual Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey or PTES which helps us compare how we are doing with other institutions, to make changes that will improve what we do in future and to keep doing the things that you value.