

4th Lisbon Winter School for the Study of Communication

Media and Ambivalence

9-12 January 2024

The 4th Lisbon Winter School for the Study of Communication takes a comparative and global approach to the study of media and ambivalence. Jointly organized by the Faculty of Human Sciences (Universidade Católica Portuguesa) and the Center for Media@Risk at the Annenberg School for Communication (University of Pennsylvania), in cooperation with the School of Journalism and Communication (Chinese University of Hong Kong), and the Helsinki Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities (University of Helsinki), the 4th Lisbon Winter School offers an opportunity for doctoral students and early career post-doctoral researchers to strategize around the study of media and ambivalence together with senior scholars in the field.

Call for Applications

It is perhaps paradoxical that media scholars tend to regard ambivalence in ambivalent ways. Many maintain that ambivalence undercuts and undermines the media environments it inhabits, introducing a level of uncertainty that obscures not only multiple aspects of the media's workings—including its messages, roles, technologies, practices and effects—but also what is most patterned and exceptional about the media writ large. Others see ambivalence as a necessary complication of the tired and overused binaries of late modernity, sustaining what the American novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald described as the “test of a first-rate intelligence,” whose “ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function” would produce generative opportunities built around the “the improbable, the implausible, often the impossible.”

Regardless, then, of how positively or negatively scholars feel about ambivalence, its presence is a clear component of media environments everywhere. But what kind of presence does it have? What are its primary attributes and pitfalls? In what ways does ambivalence make media environments better or worse? In what ways does it foster or complicate widely-adopted notions of media practices, processes, production, consumption and effects? How does it foster resistance and under which conditions?

This Winter School will examine the pairing of media and ambivalence in all its recognizable forms. Orienting to the broad spread of ways in which ambivalence can be understood to inhabit the media, it aims to develop a fuller understanding of why ambivalence is such a longstanding inhabitant of media environments. Possible questions stretch across the wide range of entry points for contemplating the media that allow for media representation and processing, media use and media refusal, media production and consumption. They include, how do the media and ambivalence shape each other? What role do the media and associated technologies play in structuring ambivalence, and what role does ambivalence play when associated with the media? Under which conditions does ambivalence emerge? How is it represented and where? How is it recognized and by whom? What impact does it have on media fare, the representation of marginalized groups or the shape of audience engagement? How does it affect the capacity to form identities, make informed decisions or embrace polarization? How does it figure in decisions to refuse or reject the media? How is ambivalence being weaponized in current political climates, and to what end? How has it been weaponized in the past?

We welcome proposals by doctoral students and early career post-doctoral researchers from all over the world to discuss the intertwined relation between media and ambivalence in different geographies and temporalities. The list below illustrates some topics for possible consideration. Other topics dealing with media and ambivalence are also welcome:

- Ambivalence towards media platforms, content, practices or effects
- Ambivalence and AI
- Techniques to counter ambivalence
- Ambivalence and identity formation
- Ambivalence and human rights
- Promoting ambivalent representations of the past
- Ambivalence in the public arena in specific national or regional contexts
- Ambivalent discourses on science and climate change
- Ambivalent discourses on racism, misogyny, classism, settler colonialism
- Ambivalence and journalism
- Ambivalence and popular culture
- Resistance to media, including media rejection, media detox, pushback on social media, news avoidance or domestic practices to control media usage
- Children and media ambivalence
- Ambivalence, media and imaginative future
- Ambivalence and conflict
- Ambivalence and overload

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PAPER PROPOSALS

Proposals should be sent to lisbonwinterschool@gmail.com no later than 30 September 2023 and include a paper title, extended abstract in English (700 words), name, e-mail address, institutional affiliation and a brief bio (max. 100 words) mentioning ongoing research. Applicants will be informed of the result of their submissions by mid-October.

FULL PAPER SUBMISSION

Presenters will be required to send in full papers (max. 20 pages, 1.5 spacing) by 15 December 2023.

CONFIRMED KEYNOTES

Juliane Prade-Weiss, Ludwig Maximilian University Munich

Larry Gross, Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, University of Southern California

Patrícia Dias, Catholic University of Portugal

Valerie Traub, University of Michigan

More to be announced