

## 5<sup>th</sup> Lisbon Winter School for the Study of Communication

### Media and Fear

7-10 January 2025

#### Call for Papers

Fear is a powerful emotion that is thought to obscure, undermine or derationalize decision-making. It can either trigger or paralyze action, inducing irrational behavior, generating moral panics or fostering responses to keep people safe. It abounds in the media coverage of wars, terror, social protests, natural disasters, technological accidents and the radical events associated with climate crises, migration, poverty, racialized violence, misogyny, settler colonialism and other global inequities. Fear lends great visibility to inflammatory discourses that are given a central stage in the information environment, creating a loss of control and predictability alongside an intensification of uncertainty, threat, risk and insecurity across different audiences. While reports on fear-inducing conditions and events have the potential to induce action and create solidarity towards those affected, the media also instigate hate against marginalized social groups who have become the target of what Ruth Wodak (2015) has called “the normalization of shameless politics.” A central ingredient of many of today’s viral videos and posts, fear can be promoted by a wide range of actors, including those who instigate action against the rule of law.

The Lisbon Winter School aims to cut through the many discourses driven by fear, and to consider its weaponization by political, religious and social actors who aim to increase their power, including leaders of democratic and authoritarian regimes, drug cartels, religious institutions, terrorist groups and protest groups. Topics include power grounded on fear, threat, and compliance; fear as a rhetorical tool to spread hate against the ‘other’; fear as a propaganda technique used throughout history; fear as a feature of contemporary polarized societies that present particular groups as sources of threat. Fear also has positive effects. It can be channeled toward helping people keep safe or avoiding danger. Wearing a mask to prevent a viral infection, abandoning a village or a city before it is hit by a typhoon, or seeking refuge during air strikes are some of the examples.

Regardless of how positively or negatively scholars feel about the invocation of fear in mediated communication, its presence is a clear component of media environments everywhere. But what kind of presence does it have? How is it part of wider strategies designed to discriminate against specific groups of people? How is it used by democratic or authoritarian regimes, terrorist or criminal groups to create compliance and counter resistance? How is fear central to nationalistic discourses in different nations? What parallels can be established between contemporary media environments and earlier regimes in which fear occupied a central stage? And how can we resist feeling threatened by messages that attempt to stir fear? These are just some of the questions the Lisbon Winter School aims to discuss. **We welcome proposals by doctoral students and early career post-doctoral researchers from all over the world** to discuss the intertwined relations between media and fear in different geographies and temporalities. The list below illustrates some of topics for possible consideration. Other topics dealing with media and fear are also welcomed:

- Media and the dissemination of fear
- Fear, populism and the media
- Terrorism and the media
- Moral panics
- Reporting war and tragedy
- Fear and the democratic process
- Communication techniques to create fear
- Fear and identity formation
- Algorithms, AI and the promotion of fear
- Promoting fear against gender, racial and religious minorities
- Fear as a tool of compliance
- Fake news and disinformation
- Fear, anxiety and irrationality
- Fear and (self-)censorship
- Fear in the public arena in specific national or regional contexts
- Climate anxiety
- Visual media and fear
- ...

## PAPER PROPOSALS

Proposals should be sent to [lisbonwinterschool@gmail.com](mailto:lisbonwinterschool@gmail.com) no later than 15 September 2024 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 early October.

## **FULL PAPER SUBMISSION**

Presenters will be required to submit full papers (max. 20 pages, 1.5 spacing) by 15 December 2024.

For more information visit [lisbonwinterschool.com](https://lisbonwinterschool.com)

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