Subject: Cultural Fragmentation of Society (MSP1107)

Instructor: Dr. Ágnes Hornyák, PhD

Hours: 2 hours/week

Week 1: Course Topics and Requirements

Week 2: Network Society and Digital Culture

This week explores how digital technologies reshape cultural and social structures. The focus is on the emergence of fragmented online communities and new forms of digital belonging.

Reading:
Colón Rodríguez, R., et al. (2008). *Culture and society in the digital age*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349054069_Culture_and_Society_in_the_Digital_Age

Week 3: Online Bubbles and Polarization

The session examines the dynamics of online echo chambers. It emphasizes how selective exposure fosters polarization and weakens democratic dialogue.

Reading:
Tucker, J. A., Guess, A., Barberá, P., Vaccari, C., Siegel, A., Sanovich, S., Stukal, D., & Nyhan, B. (2018). *Social media, political polarization, and political disinformation: A review of the scientific literature*. Hewlett Foundation.

Week 4: Identity Politics and Social Division

Students discuss identity-based political mobilization. The theme highlights both its empowering role for marginalized groups and its potential to deepen social divides.

Reading:
Bernstein, M. (2005). Identity politics. *Annual Review of Sociology, 31*(1), 47–74. https://voidnetwork.gr/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Identity-Politics-by-Mary-Bernstein-.pdf

Week 5: Migration and Social Integration

The topic introduces integration as a reciprocal process. It analyzes how newcomers and host societies negotiate belonging and cultural adaptation.

Reading:
Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 21*(2), 166–191. https://www.academia.edu/11959378/Understanding_Integration_A_Conceptual_Framework

Week 6: Populism and Cultural Backlash

This week focuses on populism as a reaction to cultural change. It explores how identity fears and cultural anxieties fuel fragmentation.

Reading:
Mudde, C. (2004). The populist zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition, 39*(4), 541–563. https://www.academia.edu/33006274/The_Populist_Zeitgeist

Week 7: Urban Segregation and Spatial Divides

The session investigates how cities reflect and reinforce social inequalities. Urban segregation is analyzed as both a cause and outcome of fragmentation.

Reading:
Vázquez Brage, M. B. (2024). How is urban vulnerability in fragmented European cities measured? *Social Inclusion, 12*(1). https://www.cogitatiopress.com/socialinclusion/article/view/8439/3707

Week 8: Online Activism and Counterpublics

Students examine the rise of digital activism. The focus is on how counterpublics challenge mainstream discourse through social media.

Reading:
Fuchs, C. (2014). Social media and the public sphere. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique, 12*(1), 57–101. http://www.triple-c.at

Week 9: Economic Inequality and Cultural Division

This week links economic inequalities to cultural fragmentation. Social networks and urban structures are analyzed as amplifiers of inequality.

Reading:
Tóth, G., Scellato, S., Ratti, C., & Sobolevsky, S. (2019). Inequality is rising where social network segregation interacts with urban topology. *arXiv preprint arXiv:1903.00725*. https://arxiv.org/pdf/1903.00725.pdf

Week 10: Media Fragmentation and Public Opinion

The session explores algorithmic personalization in news consumption. It discusses how media fragmentation reshapes public opinion and collective debate.

Reading:
Cinelli, M., Morales, G. D. F., Galeazzi, A., Quattrociocchi, W., & Starnini, M. (2021). The echo chamber effect on social media. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 118*(9), e2023301118. https://arxiv.org/pdf/1912.07564.pdf

Week 11: Education and Social Cohesion

The theme investigates the role of schools in shaping social cohesion. Education is seen as both a potential bridge and a reproducer of inequality.

Reading:
Reay, D. (2006). The zombie stalking English schools: Social class and educational inequality. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 54*(3), 288–307. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227634447_The_Zombie_Stalking_English_Schools_Social_Class_and_Educational_Inequality

Week 12: Religion and Cultural Division

Students explore the role of religion and multiculturalism in shaping social cohesion. The discussion emphasizes both enrichment and conflict potential.

Reading:
Gilani, N., Waheed, S. A., & Hussain, B. (2020). Multiculturalism and integration: Challenges, strategies and prospects of students' integration in educational environment and society. *Global Social Sciences Review, 5*(2), 174–181. http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2020(V-II).16

Week 13: The Future of Cultural Fragmentation

This week looks at models explaining future dynamics of cultural fragmentation. The focus is on the paradox of information abundance and increasing polarization.

Reading:
Xu, C., Zhang, Y., & Xu, J. J. (2020). The paradox of information access: On modeling social-media-induced polarization. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2006.16986*. https://arxiv.org/pdf/2006.16986.pdf

Week 14: Course Overview

Participation in the sessions:

- The lectures are an integral part of the training, so the Institution expects the students to participate in the lectures (TVSz § 8.1.)

Semester requirement: practical exam

- Independent topic development
- Continuous class activity
- Practice-oriented essay