Mediamatics (Media Studies) at Humboldt University Berlin

The curriculum (Master of Arts) in Mediamatics (Media Studies) has been designed within a decisively epistemological perspective. Attached to the Institute for Culture and Arts Studies (Philosophical Faculty III) the curriculum is being organized and performed at the Seminar for Media Studies. This affiliation provides for its characteristic profile, encompassing basic media-theoretical, media-archaeological, media-historical training as well as media-performative and media-dramaturgy and media-economic training with an orientation towards practical implementation. Special features within the course of studies are modules like "Time-based and Time-critical Media".

Media is understood here as physical or artificial techniques of communication, both physical and mathematical, institutional and operative. The curriculum concentrates on technical media, thus corresponding with cultural and aesthetic change taking place in the age of ultra-technical media. Computing transforms cultural artefacts into digitized data, rendering them to networking and interaction and thereby creating new cultural practices. Media are being treated within a decisively academic analysis which keeps their reflection open for future transformation.

The initial module "Media theories and Media archaeologies" provide for the complex level to create comparative, epistemological and analytic media competence which is basic for media studies. Temporally deep content is being provided by a minute media-archaeological training. Next to the genealogy of images, writing and numbers in early cultures the highly differentiated media of contemporary culture are being focussed by the curriculum, encompassing performative and operative media dramaturgies as well. Within the context of the Institute for Culture and Arts Studies an emphasis is put on the interface between history of science and the archaeology of cultural and aesthetic engineering.

Media competence can only be gained with an input of practical knowledge as well; thus the curriculum provides for practical media experience within and without the Seminar for Media Studies. The technical implementation of a Media Theatre, consisting in the combination of a Signal Processing Laboratory (computing) with a physical three-dimensional space for performative bodies allows for "theatrical" media analysis.
The critical and competent reflection of single media in their technical and sensory qualities (acoustic and visual channels of communication, media based on symbols and numbers) leads to comparative media theories, media history and economy within a operative context. The aim is to provide media-epistemological competence: the scientific and critical reflection of contemporary media within a technical, historical and theoretical context, in order to qualify students for action within a diversified media culture.

The curriculum takes place within a two-year Master of Arts course and is partially being combined with other disciplines; thus media is checked against related interdisciplinary content (from cultural studies, sound studies up to informatics, f. e.).

**Function and description of the modules:**

*Module 1: Media theories and media archaeology*

Students are provided with an advanced range of media theories and historical media knowledge. Reflective skills are being trained as well as an awareness of the dis/continuities in culture provided by media evolution.

With the differentiation of technical media in twentieth century and the emergence of a universal media machine (computer) the media-technological field and practice can only be integrated on a decisively comparative theoretical level. Comparative media theories are necessary for profound technical, epistemological, historical, economical, communicative and performative media knowledge.

*Module 2: Media history*

In this module students deepen their historical media competence to analyse the symbolical codes and technological laws governing, conditioning and modifying cultural practice. Media (r)evolutions are being faced as well as the competence to judge the current transformation of analogue into digital cultural engineering.

*Module 3: Time-based media and time-cricial media processes*

Technical media which address themselves primarily to the eyes and the ears have been classified as "time-based media" (in analogy to opera and theater); this term is central to contemporary media culture and needs highly qualified reflection. Analogue and digital techniques of generating, storing, transmitting
and distributing of acoustic, visual and audio-visual data are being treated. A focus is put on theory, history and aesthetic of time-based and time-critical media, taking examples from music, the performative arts, photography, film, television, radio, video and computing, aiming at media-specific competence for analysis.

**Module 4: Media dramaturgy and Media performance**
Media create realities by their performative power, providing for new models of communication as well as for new anthropologies of individual and collective subjects. The reality-providing functions of media are being taught with historical and contemporary media models, aiming actively at media-dramaturgical competence. In a profound way the mechanisms and dramaturgy of sensory, communicative, symbolic and virtual interaction effected by media technologies are being learned and operatively trained.

**Module 5: Media economies and media organisation**
The student learns about the economical models, systems and institutions of cross-media organization, accompanied by seminars on different kinds of media-economies such like the circulation of symbols in the Internet.

**Module 9: Advanced Projects and Module 10 Practical training**
Here the student proposes and performs an analytical research project, being supervised by the teaching staff of the Seminar of Media Studies; the module offers as well practical training f. e. in computer programming, video production, media-theatrical performance.

**Module 7: Interdisciplinary choice**
This module consists of seminars taking place outside the Seminar of Media Studies within related disciplines; here media-related courses (when compatible with the philosophy of the Master of Arts in Mediamatics/Media Studies) can be chosen in close cooperation with affiliated teachers.

(extracts from the German curriculum, translated and condensed by Wolfgang Ernst)