

**Scuola Superiore Meridionale**

**Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II**

**PhD course in Law and Organizational Studies for the Promotion of Diversity and Inclusion**

**a.y. 2024/25**

**Business Organization and Communication: Digital Media, Sound, Disability**

**Domenico Napolitano**

**d.napolitano@ssmeridionale.it**

### **Course description**

This course is an investigation on the role of communication in organizing, with special regard for its declination in digital media, sound and disability. The course is addressed to doctoral students and undergraduate students, coming from any research area of the School. The final evaluation will take into account the students' different educational level.

Digital media, sound and disability are interrelated: while communication is constitutive of organizations, media technologies are nowadays the main way in which communication is enacted and sound is a crucial part of it; the communicational aspect of organization is also central for disability, since it is through communication aids that disabled people can gain agency, accessibility and inclusion within organizations. In example, augmentative and alternative communication technologies (AAC) based on sound and voice processing can allow broader accessibility and greater inclusion for disabled people with voice or hearing-related impairments, as well as sensor-motor impairments.

In the last decades, scholars have focused the attention on socio-material practices of organizing, in which humans are not anymore the main social actor, while agency is shared in communicative assemblages made of both humans and nonhumans. In this framework, media are being thought of less as conduits or channels connecting one agent with another, and more as structuring conditions configuring the very possibility of agency. Relationships between media and organization can be read in a double sense: on one side media are imagined, designed, operated and transformed in the social context of organizations; on the other, are media themselves, with their nonhuman agencies, that have an organizing power.

In this perspective, communication is not understood merely as the vehicle for the expression of pre-existing 'realities'; rather, it is the means by which organizations are established, composed, designed, and sustained. Consequently, organizations can no longer be seen as objects, entities, or

'social facts' inside of which communication occurs. Organizations are portrayed, instead, as ongoing and precarious accomplishments realized, experienced, and identified primarily – if not exclusively – *in* communication processes. Such processes, which are traditionally related to speech, discourse and writing, are becoming ever more affected by media technologies, network systems and their specific epistemologies.

Among these, sound and sound technologies play an important role, although their importance is being reevaluated only very recently. Sound, in fact, is both a medium of communication and a nonhuman organizing force which affects our way to experience and know the world. This consideration becomes crucial when dealing with the issue of disability and of the way sound technologies affect and potentially enhance the social and communicative agency of disabled people.

This series of classes will engage with several perspectives, from communication theory to media studies, sound studies and disability studies, highlighting intersections among disciplinary fields and their consequences for issues organization theory and organizational inclusion.

## **Aims**

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- understand the importance of communication in organizing and organizational studies;
- master the main concepts of communication theory and media studies;
- recognize the importance of sound and acoustic communication in organization, and the theoretical and practical issues they raise;
- understand the main issues raised by disability studies and their importance for organization studies;
- recognize the role of sound and communication technologies in organizational inclusion of disabled people.

## **Learning methods**

- Students will be required to read the mandatory texts related to each class, as listed in the detailed program below.
- Classes will be based on discussions between the professor and the students regarding the main issues emerging from the background readings. Additionally, students will be expected to engage critically with the texts, identifying the main strengths and weaknesses of the assigned readings.
- All students are expected to actively participate in the debate, providing comments and raising questions on the issues discussed in class.
- Doctoral students will have to prepare a final presentation which has to examine in depth one of the aspects touched upon in the class. The work will be presented during the final class.

## Course material

The course material will consist of book chapters and journal articles. In addition to the required readings listed for each lecture, further readings will be suggested during the classes covering specific topics in greater detail. Some of the mandatory texts will be available for consultation in the University Library. Students who may have problems with materials retrieval can contact the teacher at the following email: [d.napolitano@ssmeridionale.it](mailto:d.napolitano@ssmeridionale.it)

## Exam & Evaluation

Doctoral students will be evaluated based on their constructive participation in class and the final presentation. The quality of in-class participation accounts for 60% of the evaluation.

Undergraduate students will agree their evaluation method with the teacher during the Course.

## Final presentation

Students will have to prepare a presentation which examines in depth one of the aspects touched upon in the class, at their choice. The presentation can be delivered in any format (power point, artwork, sound work, project work, multimedia work, scientific paper, and so on), and will have to be discussed with the class during the final lesson.

## Detailed program

<b>Class 1</b> 17/03/2025 15:00-17:00 Room 2	<b>Disability studies: an introduction</b>
Mandatory readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Shakespeare, T. (2017), <i>Disabilità e società: Diritti, falsi miti, percezioni sociali</i>, Eriksson</li></ul>
Optional readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Oliver, M. (1996), <i>Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice</i>, Basingstoke, Macmillan (Introduction).</li></ul>

<b>Class 2</b> 24/03/2025 15:00-17:00 Room 2	<b>Disability, politics and organization</b>
Mandatory readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Oliver, M. (2023), <i>Le politiche della disabilitazione</i>, Ombre Corte.</li></ul>
Optional readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Oliver, M. (1996), <i>Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice</i>, Basingstoke, Macmillan (Introduction).</li></ul>

<b>Class 3</b> 31/03/2025 15:00-17:00 Room 2	<b>Disability, impairment and the social-relational model</b>
Mandatory readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thomas, Carol (2004) "Rescuing a social relational understanding of disability" <i>Scandinavian journal of disability research</i>, 6 (1): 22-37.</li> </ul>
Optional readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thomas, Carol (2012) "Theorising Disability and Chronic Illness: Where Next for Perspectives in Medical Sociology?" <i>Social Theory &amp; Health</i> 10 (3): 209-228.</li> </ul>

<b>Class 4</b> 07/04/2025 15:00-17:00 Room 3	<b>Crip Theory</b>
Mandatory readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kafer, Alison (2013) <i>Feminist, queer, crip</i>, Bloomington: Indiana University Press (Introduction)</li> <li>• McRuer, Robert (2023), <i>Teoria Crip</i>, Città di Castello: Odoya (Introduzione) [original edition <i>Crip Theory</i>, New York University Press, 2006]</li> </ul>
Optional readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McRuer, Robert (2018) <i>Crip Times: Disability, Globalization, and Resistance</i>, New York: New York University Press.</li> </ul>

<b>Class 5</b> 14/04/2025 15:00-17:00 Room 2	<b>Embodiment, sensoriality and technology</b>
Mandatory readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kafer, Alison (2013) <i>Feminist, queer, crip</i>, Bloomington: Indiana University Press (Chapter 5: The cyborg and the crip)</li> <li>• Reeve, Donna (2012) 'Cyborgs, cripples and iCrip: Reflections on the contribution of Haraway to disability studies', in D. Goodley, B. Hughes and L. J. Davis (eds) <i>Disability and Social Theory: New Developments and Directions</i>, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 91-111.</li> </ul>
Optional readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hamraie, Aimi, and Kelly Fritsch. 2019. "Crip Technoscience Manifesto." <i>Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience</i> 5(1): 1-34. <a href="https://doi.org/10.28968/cftt.v5i1.29607">https://doi.org/10.28968/cftt.v5i1.29607</a>.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shildrick, M. (2015) “Why should our bodies end at the skin?”, <i>Hypatia</i>, 30(1).</li> </ul>
--	---

<b>Class 6</b> 28/04/2025 15:00-17:00 Room 2	<b>Media and disability: Impairment theory</b>
Mandatory readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sterne, J. (2021), <i>Diminished Faculties: A Political Phenomenology of Impairment</i>, Durham &amp; London, Duke University Press (<i>Introduction, Chapter 2 and Impairment theory: a user’s guide</i>).</li> </ul>
Optional readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hughes, Bill, and Kevin Paterson. 1997. “The Social Model of Disability and the Disappearing Body: Towards a Sociology of Impairment.” <i>Disability &amp; Society</i> 12 (3): 325–40.  <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599727209">https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599727209</a>.</li> </ul>

<b>Class 7</b> 05/05/2025 15:00-17:00 Room 2	<b>Media and disability: blindness and assistive technology</b>
Mandatory readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Napolitano, D., Ripetta, S., Sicca, L.M. (2024), “The sonic side of organizing: theorizing acoustemology for blind and visually impaired people’s inclusion in the workplace”, <i>Culture and Organization</i>, doi: 10.1080/14759551.2024.2326883.</li> </ul>
Optional readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kleege, G. (2018) <i>More than meets the eye</i>, Oxford University Press.</li> </ul>

<b>Class 8</b> 12/05/2025 15:00-17:00 Room 2	<b>Disability, Accessibility and Art – part 1</b>
Mandatory readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cachia, A. (2023), Introduction: Committed to change – ten years of creative access, in A. Cachia (ed.), <i>Curating Access: Disability Art Activism and Creative Accommodation</i>, Taylor &amp; Francis.</li> </ul>
Optional readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Papalia, C. (2023), Open Access: Accessibility as Temporary , Collective Held Space, in A. Cachia (ed.), <i>Curating Access: Disability Art Activism and Creative Accommodation</i>, Taylor &amp; Francis.</li> </ul>

<b>Class 9</b>	<b>Disability, Accessibility and Art – part 2</b>
----------------	---

26/05/2025 15:00-17:00 Room 3	
Mandatory readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kallio-Tavin, Mira (2020) 'Participatory and Community-Based Contemporary Art Practices with People with Disabilities'. In A. Wexler &amp; J. Derby (Eds.), <i>Contemporary Art and Disability Studies</i>, pp. 63-75, New York and London: Routledge.</li> </ul>
Optional readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Papalia, C. (2023), Open Access: Accessibility as Temporary , Collective Held Space, in A. Cachia (ed.), <i>Curating Access: Disability Art Activism and Creative Accommodation</i>, Taylor &amp; Francis.</li> </ul>

<b>Class 10</b> 09/06/2025 11:00-13:00 Room 2	<b>Students' works discussion – Q&amp;A</b>
	Students will share their questions and doubts about their work in progress, present preliminary results and discuss with the class about the ongoing work.

<b>Class 11-12</b> 09/06/2025 15:00-19:00 Room 2	<b>Assessment</b>
	Each student will have to prepare a presentation which examines in depth one of the aspects touched upon in the class, at their choice. The presentation can be delivered in any format (power point, artwork, sound work, project work, multimedia work, scientific paper, and so on), and will have to be discussed with the class.