



Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Media and Communication Studies

Syllabus

Data, Power and Ethics

Course Code: MKGB95

Course Title: Data, Power and Ethics
Data, makt och etik

Credits: 7.5

Degree Level: Undergraduate level

Progressive Specialisation: First cycle, has less than 60 credits in first-cycle course/s as entry requirements (G1F)

Major Field of Study:

MKA (Media and Communication Studies)

Course Approval

The syllabus was approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences 2024-08-28, and is valid from the Spring semester 2025 at Karlstad University.

Prerequisites

Registered for MKGB90 Technical foundations of digital media and digital design, 15 ECTS credits, and MKGB91 Digital analysis methods, 15 ECTS credits, or equivalent

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. differentiate between different categories of data with regard to ownership, accessibility, and the interests of different actors,
2. identify and describe ethical and policy-based frameworks that apply to platforms and to the generation, use, and analysis of data,
3. critically discuss problematic cases of data analysis with a focus on issues of ethics and power,
4. reflect on the relationship between platforms, data, ethics, and society in terms of privacy and surveillance, discrimination and information asymmetries, the social construction of

data, and the biases of algorithms, and

5. evaluate political frameworks for platforms and data with regard to the advancement of information, diversity, gender equality, inclusion, sustainability, and fairness.

Content

The course deals with critical and ethical issues related to platforms and arising from the use and interpretation of data. It blends social and historical perspectives with case examples to help students develop a user-oriented understanding of current ethical issues in analyses of data and platforms. Students are introduced to discourses concerning bias in socio-technical systems, algorithmic openness and accountability, ideologies of data, information asymmetries, and the current political economy of data. Frameworks, concepts, and theories are discussed in order for the students to appreciate the perspectives of multiple actors involved in data analysis and understand how data are socially constructed. A central concern of the course is how the benefits of data analysis can be mobilised beyond notions of efficiency, automation and rationalisation in order to advance a more democratic and sustainable development of society.

Reading List

See separate document.

Examination

Learning outcomes 1-5 are assessed based on a written exam

Learning outcomes 3-5 are also assessed based on an individual written hand-in assignment and an oral and written group assignment presented and discussed in a seminar.

If students have a decision from Karlstad University entitling them to Targeted Study Support due to a documented disability, the examiner has the right to give such students an adapted examination or to examine them in a different manner.

Grades

One of the grades Distinction (VG), Pass (G) or Fail (U) is awarded in the examination of the course.

Quality Assurance

Follow-up relating to learning conditions and goal-fulfilment takes place both during and upon completion of the course in order to ensure continuous improvement. Course evaluation is partly based on student views and experiences obtained in accordance with current regulations and partly on other data and documentation. Students will be informed of the result of the evaluation and of any measures to be taken.

Course Certificate

A course certificate will be provided upon request.

Additional information

The local regulations for studies at the Bachelor and Master levels at Karlstad University stipulate the obligations and rights of students and staff.