

## Culture

- implies the ways of life associated with a particular society or group.
- Forms and practices of creative and artistic expressions associated with a particular society or group
- culture is the second sense is often divided into high and low (popular/folk) aspects.
- High culture would be types of culture that are more valued.
- What divides high/low is essentially who gets to make that definition.
- Comparing high and low culture sometimes comes down to complexity where history plays a role
- Music from video games or movies are not high culture may relate to it being created to be commercially sold to consumers. Sometimes high culture can be rare and are not commonplace. On this topic, nobody sets the rules and a lot of what we talk about is arbitrary.

## Media Technologies

### Medium Theories:

Range from technological determinism to social constructivism

Technological Determinism: Tech's properties dictate how it will be used and the effects that it has on society (structure)

Social Constructivism: Society chooses the roles media play and therefore their effects (Agency)

Structure/Agency Binary.

## Media Tech: Innis and McLuhan

### Harold Innis:

- Believed that empires are constrained in their growth by the media they employ and their monopolies of knowledge
- Two type of media: Time biased and Space biased

## Media Tech: Innis and McLuhan (cont)

- Time biased are heavy, brittle, durable and difficult to transport. They are generally meant to emphasize the eternal.
- Space biased media are light, impermanent and help to project power through space.
- Monopolies of knowledge: Systems that constrain who is able to access and use media technologies. **THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE**
- Marshall McLuhan
- The medium is the message: The technologies that we use to communicate ultimately shape the people using them. In a print culture people become more logical and linear in their thinking, because print is linear and logical
- Content is less important than what the media we do does to us.
- The extensions of man: Technologies are merely humans extending our bodies through space
- Media can be Hot or Cool
- Hot media: High information density and low user participation (book)
- Cool media: Low information density and high user participation (saw tv as cool)
- Hammer extension of hand. Radio extension of the ear, Tv extension of the sense of touch, computers extensions of the central nervous system.

## Two Traditions

### TWO TRADITIONS, BOTH ALIKE IN DIGNITY...

Two major traditions in the study of Media Industries: Critical theory and Political Economy.

Both are essentially sub branches of Marxist thinking

Critical Theory is most concerned with questions of how media industries as part of the capitalist system maintain control.

Political Economy is concerned with question of ownership and the influence it gives.

## Marxism

### THE BASICS

- Wealth and power are controlled by the bourgeoisie
- The bourgeoisie own the means of production
- They buy labour from the proletariat
- They take the surplus value of labour and turn it into profits
- The proletariat trades their wages for commodities like food, shelter & clothing, further enriching the bourgeoisie
- To gain a new political or cultural system the current one must be overthrown
- All institutions in capitalism support the circulation of its ideology through it the bourgeoisie and therefore must be undone

## Political Economy

### COMMERCIAL OWNERSHIP:

#### EXPANSION WITHIN A SECTOR

- Under this model, corporations try to expand as much as possible within a particular sector to control as much of the market as possible.

- A recent example of this in the United States would be the effort by Comcast to purchase Time Warner Cable.

#### Horizontal Integration:

Movie Studio > Record Label > Video Game Company > Book Publisher > Online Portal

#### Vertical Integration:

Movie Studio > Film Distributer > Movie Theatre > TV network

#### ACROSS MANY INDUSTRIES

- In North America the top six publishers own 60 percent of the non academic book market. All these publishers are a few blocks apart in New York City

- The top three music publishers, Warner Music, Sony Music Entertainment and Universal Music Group, control 87.9 percent of the market



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Published 4th February, 2015.

Last updated 12th May, 2016.

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## Political Economy (cont)

Concentration of Ideas? Simpsons example using fox news as a punch line

## Media Content

### SEMILOGY IN A NUTSHELL

Semiology means the science of signs

Signs are made up of signifier and signified

The Signified is the what is being referred to by the sign

The Signifier is that word or symbol that is used to represent the signified The two things together make up the sign.

### DENOTATION, CONNOTATION AND MYTH

Denotation: The most immediate level of meaning. Eg. A picture of a face denotes a specific person

Connotation: Associative meanings, generally more abstract concepts that are invoked by a sign. Eg. A woman on a magazine cover representing the concepts of femininity or sexiness.

Myth: A broad set of cultural assumptions and beliefs evoked and reinforced by media texts.

Myth of the Coke Bottle: Have to buy to be happy. consuming products makes you happy. Would the message be different if it was a caucasian man with the same everything drinking the bottle of coke.

Syntematically, everything works together in this ad. Drink coke you can be fit and happy.

SKYY Vodka: meaning of this ad: sex, rich, money. Connotated meaning: implied that classy dude. Drink thi sdrink you will be more popular. Mythological message: suggest women need to find and rich man, servent, decoration.

### PARADIGMATIC AND SYNTAGMATIC

Paradigmatic analysis involves breaking texts into their component elements and analysing how the meaning would be different if alternate signifiers were considered.

## Media Content (cont)

Syntagmatic analysis involves analysing how signs work together in context to create a specific message.

### NARRATIVE, GENRE AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Narrative Analysis: focuses on the structures and conventions of narrative story telling.

### GENRE ANALYSIS

Genre analysis looks at the establishment and operation of conventions within a genre.

### DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

- Based in large part on the work of Michel Foucault

- Foucault's work focused in large part on how different uses of language shaped experience.

- For Foucault the ability to shape discourses is power in the sense that it is the ability to include or exclude certain people or ideas from society.

- Discourse analysis seeks to track these discourses and how they are used to shape perception.

### QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

- Meant to be more rigorous and scientific than qualitative methods like semiology

- Strives for the objectivity of science rather than subjectivity of interpretation

- Focuses on counting instances of a particular phenomenon in media (i.e. the number of times something violent happens)
- Seeks standardized practices so that experiments can be repeated across a wide swath of group

## Models of Transmission (cont)

Reverse of above- all the media does is reflect society back at itself. Single influence model where it goes one direction. Doesn't understand what media is. Media is people who are making choices on what gets said.

### Circular Model:

Tries to get away from one directional. Acknowledges that society can have an impact on media representation, and more media on marginalized groups creates societies acceptance of those ideologies. Model breaks down have just two boxes, society is more complicated then just one homogenized unit, and media rep isn't a singular entity either.

### Shannon and Weaver's Model of Communication:

Meant to talk about broadcast media: information source transmitted to receiver and then heard at a destination. Noise can be interference of this process of understanding as the receiver. Noise can be cultural or ideological where a message can become distorted. Not the most complex or useful because of its focus on broadcast media.

### Who Says What Model:

Broadcast model of the sending a one way message from a sender to a receiver. Not useful in describing multidirectional communication. Effect is hard to talk about and can create an oversimplification where other factors are ignored that effect individual groups or societies.

## Models of Transmission

### Media as Shaper:

Media has a direct one to one effect on society. Presented in media and goes straight into society. Too simplistic and one directional it is is problematic. No sense of agency.

### Media as Mirror:

## Society

- networks of institutions, relationships, interactions and culture within which individual lives take place
- group of people involved in interpersonal relationships, or a large social grouping sharing the same geographical or social



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Published 4th February, 2015.

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### Society (cont)

territory typically within the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. Human societies are characterized by patterns of relationships between people who share a distinctive culture and institutions.

### Simplified Model

Simplified Model of the Elements of Media in Socio-Cultural Contexts

differentiated with more points and will be referenced throughout the course.

Media Content: academics call the text: blogs, podcasts, paintings, etc. Anything that is communicating a message.

Connection between content and users because people consumer media.

Media industry: most of our culture via large national corps who's business is to entertain and inform with goal of making money. Who controls what can be said? What happens when these corporations control these messages?

Media Technology: What effects does tech have on people in societies: understanding the level of agency people have with regards to tech within media.

Media Users: Us, and society in general that is differentiated/fragmented/complex

Broader social and cultural environment: society, cultural rules/morals/taboos, gov't rules informal and formal, role of regulation.

### The Culture Industry

- Horkheimer and Adorno posit that when culture becomes a sub-branch of industry creativity is stripped away
- Culture becomes like any product coming out of a factory, standardized and meant to be consumed
- Leads to a world where culture lacks complexity and depth

### The Culture Industry (cont)

- This type of cultural system creates a system where all culture is produced for profit and not for the betterment of humanity
- Art in their view needs to be for its own sake rather than for profit

#### THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL

Culture industry transforms culture into standardized products. Do nothing to challenge or enlighten the audience.

Example: two nickelback songs at the same time

#### MASS PRODUCED DISTRACTION

- Horkheimer and Adorno also see one of the fundamental problems of the culture industry and the products it produces as being that they allow people to remain in a state of contentment.
- The culture industry for them is a form of control over people that specifically is meant to hide the problems of the capitalist system.
- They see the culture industry as ultimately producing a form of false consciousness.

#### AMUSEMENT AS LABOR

- Adorno and Horkheimer suggest that in the system of the culture industry people are made to work even when they are engaged in leisure.
- This view essentially concludes that what is being sold is not the cultural product, but in fact the audience.

•Marxists consider what is being sold in a capitalist economy to be not so much good as the surplus value of people's labour. Basically it is the work of people that creates value in capitalist economies.

- The audience is being sold as a commodity to advertisers who want their money and even their leisure time becomes a commodity that can be made profitable

#### THE WORK OF ART IN THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION

### The Culture Industry (cont)

- Walter Benjamin argues that what makes a work of art special is its unique aura
- When art can be reproduced by mechanical means, ultimately it loses that specialness and is reduced. Example: seeing the Mona Lisa everywhere makes it less special. Same with a piece of music after the phonograph.

### Media Tech: Postman and Mander

Neil Postman:

- Media Ecology: Philosophy that treats media systems in the same way as biological ecosystems.
- Changes are ecological not additive.
- Television is a total disclosure medium. Everyone sees the same things
- Print is a medium that builds different levels of competence, therefore information can be slowly trickled out when it is deemed to be appropriate
- Postman sees democracy as arising from the age of print and wonders if it can survive in the age of television Postman 5 things we need to know about technological change

First, that we always pay a price for technology; the greater the technology, the greater the price. Impact that writing had on memory. Once written, human memory doesn't have to be as precise.

Second, that there are always winners and losers, and that the winners always try to persuade the losers that they are really winners. Ex) google and newspapers

Third, that there is embedded in every great technology an epistemological, political or social prejudice. Sometimes that bias is greatly to our advantage. Sometimes it is not.

Fourth, technological change is not additive; it is ecological, which means, it changes everything and is, therefore, too important to be left entirely in the hands of Bill Gates.



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## Media Tech: Postman and Mander (cont)

Fifth, technology tends to become mythic; that is, perceived as part of the natural order of things, and therefore tends to control more of our lives than is good for us. .... When a technology become mythic, it is always dangerous because it is then accepted as it is, and is therefore not easily susceptible to modification or control.

Jerry Mander

Arguments for the Elimination of Television in a nutshell

1. While television may seem useful, interesting, and worthwhile, at the same time it further boxes people into a physical and mental condition appropriate for the emergence of autocratic control.

2. It is inevitable that the present powers-that-be (or controllers) use and expand using television so that no other controllers are permitted.

3. Television affects individual human bodies and minds in a manner which fit the purposes of the people who control the medium.

4. Television has no democratic potential. The technology itself places absolute limits on what may pass through it. The medium, in effect, chooses its own content from a very narrow field of possibilities. The effect is to drastically confine all human understanding within a rigid channel.

Source: Wikipedia

## Tech in a social context

The Tool does not determine its use

Use depends on the context and motivation of the user

Tools are not the driver of human needs but a response to them

Technologies are constrained by their affordances

Affordances are the technical limits that dictate what a technology can or cannot do (shovel can't cut grass)

The circuit of Culture: diagram in textbook



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## Tech in a social context (cont)

Tech doesn't have pre given meaning, enters social setting and it becomes complex. Creating of meaning from numerous different nodes. Lin Speigal book.

Techno-Utopianism:

One laptop per child.

DIY Culture:

Youtube, etc. Liberal democratic view of new technologies. People have ability to produce content that sells, more voices can occur.

Is the internet really free and open?

Where how we access our content is controlled by few companies. Is it dangerous. Edward Snowden.

Evgeny Morozov RDA video.

Looking back at the simplified model: media technology will depend on your philosophy. technological determinist or social constructivist.

## Limits on Media Industries

### SOURCES OF REVENUE: 3 TYPES

- Advertising Revenue (magazines, newspapers, television)
- Direct Audience payments (including subscription fees: Services like Pandora, Spotify, Xbox Music, Netflix etc...)
- Licensing of content and formats

### MAXIMIZING AUDIENCE

- Why does so much television resemble other programs that came before it?
- Why do only certain channels such as HBO, AMC and Showtime tend to have all of the 'innovative programs'?
- Can we think of broadcast television (CTV, ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX) as simply manufacturing the next hit television series?

### GOVERNMENT AND REGULATION

#### Access restrictions

- Typically come in the form of fees or licensing restrictions

## Limits on Media Industries (cont)

- More acute with media that use "public" property such as airwaves
- Much more heavily utilized in Europe and Canada than in the United States
- Has become increasingly problematic as forms like cable and internet have appeared which do not utilize public resources

**OWNERSHIP RESTRICTIONS**

- Generally ownership restrictions limit not who can own media, but how much of it they can own
- Often there are restrictions within a specific industry. So that no company could own more than a certain percentage of newspapers in a given country
- Often limits the ability of a media company in one market to expand horizontally into another. i.e. a company that owns a local newspaper may not own a local television station

**CONTENT REGULATION**

- Either for 'morality purposes" certain themes are limited using government censorship schemes or to protect national culture
- A famous example of a morality codes was the Motion Pictures Production Code (also called the Hays code) which used a panel of censors to judge Hollywood films from 1934-1968
- Gov't and Regulation
- National Content Regulation
- Protect Canadian culture to invest in Canadian artists and programs. Little to stop companies to fill schedule with US content.
- Copyright
- Protect media assets from stealing or use for profit.

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Last updated 12th May, 2016.

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