

ARTS 2093 NOTES

Key Concepts

1. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media

- Social media are networked database platforms that combine public with personal communication (Miekle 2016)
- Social media delivers content via a network of participants where the content can be published by anyone, but still distributed across potentially large scale audiences (Page et al)
- It can enable anyone to develop and display their creativity, to empathize with others and to find connection, communication and communion (Miekle)
- They are also surveillance systems through which users can become complicit in their own commercial exploitation (Miekle)
- Social media are:
 - Two-way computer mediated communication
 - Oriented towards the exchange of information
 - Interpersonal
 - Relational self-expression
 - Rich and multimodal
 - On a spectrum between synchronous and asynchronous

Audiences

- Theory extends understanding beyond common sense accounts: Scope, Perspective, Timescale
- Traditional/historic definition “the action of hearing” has transformed over time, from physically being present in an amphitheater to digital broadcasts.
- **Mediated Audiences:** they are displaced in space or time from the original text. (you do not have to be physically present)

Media Effects Theories

- *Hypodermic Needle Model (1920s)*
 - Audience construed as passive; The media injects ideas into the brains of a passive audience
 - Mathematical model of communication
 - No longer used as theory lacks factors such as personal experience, culture
- *Two-Step Flow Model*
 - Two step theory of mass communication: Informal, personal communication more strongly influenced voting intention than the media (1944 study in Ohio)
 - ‘opinion leaders’ mediate between the media and the audience
 - Ideas often flow from radio and print to opinion leaders and from these to the less active sections of the population (Katz 1957)
 - **Klout Score:** social media analytics, popularity, ranks ‘influence’ in social media
- *Influence*
 - Various social media metrics are used in marketing and other domains to assign ‘scores’ to the users’ ‘influence’
 - ‘**The million-follower fallacy**’ (Avnit 2009): the number of followers does not indicate influence of user
 - more influential to have an active audience who retweets or mentions the user
 - **Influence and Two-Step Flow Theory**
 - Although audience attention is highly concentrated on a minority of elite users, much of the information they produce reaches the masses indirectly via a large population of intermediaries (Wu et al. 2011)

- *Uses & Gratifications Model*

- The audience actively seeks media that meets their needs
- Audiences are seen as being selective, involved or in a using relationship to communications
- Social media – predicting motivations behind Facebook self-disclosure: passing time, exhibitionism etc.
- Looks at audience behavior before, during and after media exposure
- *Problems for this model*
 - How do you operationalize the variables?
 - 'self-report' and tacit knowledge
 - correlation does not equal causation
 - foregrounds psychological factors, and backgrounds socio-cultural factors

2. AUDIENCE THEORY

Active Audience

- Audience is a shift concept: We think we are seeing reality when what we see is more like a holographic reflection, changing as our own point of reference changes and dependent on our ability to see – on the quality of our vision. (Nightingale)
- Audience is framed through 'audiencing': audience is process not a static thing, they are active, audiences have agency
- TV Audiences: the audience defined taxonomically as a group of individuals who, though they may never meet, share the common feature of watching television; or is the audience defined as a collectivity, a group of individuals who engage directly with each other about the media they view" (Livingstone)
- **Active Audiences:** Are active 'interpreters' of media texts. They might change the meaning of media messages based on collective action

Reception Theory

- Reception studies focus on how audiences interpret media texts
 - Involve 'studying the interpretive contexts which frame and inform a viewer's understanding of the media' (Hills)
- Focus shifts from what is this text saying to how audiences interpret media texts. How we translate those messages into our own context

Encoding/Decoding Model

- According to Stuart Hall (1980) social positioning influences how media texts are interpreted by different groups. Producing different readings of media texts.
- Three ways of 'decoding' a text
 - **Dominant (hegemonic) reading:** code and reading in alignment
 - When the viewer takes the connoted meaning from a television newscast or current affairs programme full and straight, decodes the message in terms of the reference code in which it has been encoded, we might say the viewer is operating inside the dominant code (Hall)
 - **Negotiated reading:** code is partially modified in reading
 - Decoding within the negotiated version contains a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements: it acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make grand significations (abstract), while at a more restricted, situational level, it makes its own ground rule – it operates with exceptions to the rule (Hall)
 - **Oppositional reading:** code is resisted by reading
 - He/she detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference. This is the case of the viewer who listens to a debate on the need to limit wages but 'reads' every mention of the 'national interest' as 'class interest'. He/she is operating with what we must call an oppositional code
- Contrast to media effects:
- Any 'reading' of a TV programme is also a form of symbolic work which transforms already encoded materials back into the raw material of action and interpretation (Hall)
- News values such as 'balance' and 'impartiality' actually help generate, rather than mitigate against preferred meanings (Procter)
- Meaning does not occur or appear 'naturally', but must be produced or made to appear through a particular kind of practice; the practice of signification. Several different codes are required to construct the meaning of a message; it is the product of several meaning-systems set to work in some form of combination (Hall)