

# MDA10001 INTRO TO MEDIA STUDIES

## LECTURE WEEK 6: 11.04.18

Taste & why people like media

### Things to question the question

1. What judgement are you being asked to make here? – What are you going to evaluate?
2. What else are you being asked to do? – Apply an analysis of a text?

### Places to research:

- Library
- Google scholar
- Specific journals

### Referencing:

- 'QUOTE' (Smith, 1994, p.2)
- McLuhan said 'the extensions of man (1946, p.4) – no name he already said the name
- McLuhan, M 1946, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of man*, MIT Press, Massachusetts
- 6 peer-reviewed sources, 2 must be outside of the course

### **Pierre Bourdieu**

- Highly influential sociologist
- *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste (1979)*
- Grounds in statistical analysis
- Key theorists of taste and the different forms of capital
- **TASTE CLASSIFIES, AND IT CLASSIFIES THE CLASSIFIER - BOURDIEU**
- **Bourdieu:** the logic of economics should be broadened to include the pursuit of **symbolic** interests
- "Tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes... it is no accident that when they have to be justified, they are asserted negatively, by the refusal of other tastes" (*Distinction, 56*)
- For Bourdieu, there are three types of capital
  1. **Economic capital:** money, assets
  2. **Social capital:** group membership, networks of influence and support
  3. **Cultural capital:** knowledge, skill, qualifications
- For Bourdieu, there are three types of cultural capital
  1. **Embodied:** the way you present yourself
  2. **Objectified:** maybe you own a great work of art?
  3. **Institutionalised:** qualifications, awards
- Bourdieu saw the growth of the second two as meaning cultural capital is how modern societies are structured: **TASTE BECOMES A SOCIAL MECHANISM**
- People w/ high cultural capital = better able to determine what is 'acceptable' or desirable taste within a given society
- These people can be thought of as taste-makers
- Why do you like the things you like? You might...
  1. Value a particular aesthetic experience
  2. Be replicating the taste of those around you/those you admire
  3. Use your taste as a maker of your social status
  4. Have a taste limited to the things you encounter: choosing 'the necessary'
  5. Your taste may be a means of social action (linked to education, occupation, affiliation)

## Hegemony

- Antonio Gramsci wrote about 'cultural hegemony' in his *Prison Notebooks*
- Hegemony describes how one social group can dominate society
- The ruling class normalises disparities and creates the perception that their power benefit everyone
- **Taste** can be hegemonic

### 1. Adorno:

- The Culture Industry offers "the freedom to choose what is always the same"
- "Something is provided for all so none may escape"
- Amusement for Adorno, is the antithesis of art. Roughly analogous to his understanding of the culture industries
- "Both [high and low culture] are torn halves of an integral freedom [which] do not add up"

### 2. Dick Hebdige:

- *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979)
- Subcultures work on the level of style and symbols. They hybridise styles out of images and material available to them
- Construct identities to achieve "relative autonomy"
- Subcultures "challenge at a symbolic level in the 'inevitability', the 'naturalness' of class and gender stereotypes"
- Ultimate point: symbolic difference can be important in tracking taste (or subcultures)

### 3. Stuart Hall:

- For Hall, there is no natural division between high and low art
- What is high culture and what is low culture has changed from one historical era to another
- However, Hall also recognises (as we should) that Western culture has developed the high/low distinction as "a mechanism of ordering and sense-making"
- He also says there is an inherent contradiction in popular culture: is both manufactured and authentic

## High art/ low art:

1. **Adorno:** fundamentally incompatible regimes of taste
2. **Hebdige:** symbolic difference can define taste
3. **Hall:** no natural divisions of taste but 'high/low' has been used as organising framework. Often manufactured and authentic simultaneously