

ESSENTIAL LEARNING RESOURCES

GOODBYE CONSUMING! HELLO COMMUNITY!:

Terminology used to categorise media audiences has shifted over time, ranging from 'consumers' to 'prosumers' to 'producers' (Grinnell 2009:597). Indeed, some question whether or not the persistent use of the term 'audience' is itself misleading and counter productive (Merrin 2009:24).

In the context of television multiplatforming, Dan Harries (2002) coined the term 'viewers' - a portmanteau that combines 'users' and 'viewers' 'to bridge the more passive notions associated with spectatorship and the active engagement protocols of "using" or interacting with new media' (Edwards 2004).

On the other hand, Axel Bruns (2007) has claimed in his research that the concept of 'production' is now entirely redundant and instead uses the concept 'produsage' to encapsulate the 'creative, collaborative, and ad hoc engagement with content' by 'producers', particularly in 'user-led spaces' such as Wikipedia. 'Prosumer' has also been a widely applied term in various settings for some time. If one thing's for certain, thinking of an audience as merely 'consumers' just doesn't work anymore.

The debate over the shifting nature of the 'audience' has important implications for how we see the roles of students and teachers. David Gauntlett's (2001:loc 475) call for a 'Media Studies 2.0' approach. This points toward a world where students are making and sharing learning resources, individually and collaboratively, and responding to each other, in the way that YouTube contributors do when a community of enthusiasts create, share, and respond to each other's contributions in a virtuous spiral of learning and development.

Gauntlett's description of student participation is very different from a unit being exclusively designed by a teacher, with information primarily being delivered to students. The idea of co-creating learning resources would understandably seem very strange to most, but this is part of the 'philosophy' that informs this unit.

In his own argument for Media Studies 2.0, William Merrin (2009:24) writes to educators:

When we hear the complaint that our students no longer watch anything we should take the hint: that is because in their messaging, sharing, tagging, twittering, Facebooking, gaming, chatting, commenting, reviewing, editing, posting, uploading and creation they're not watching: they're doing. Whatever else this is, it isn't simply 'reception'.

SOCIAL MEDIA STEREOTYPES:

On the other hand, very different social media stereotypes can have very negative consequences. Young social media users, in particular, are frequently (and paradoxically) both *infantilised* and *demonised* for their online behaviour: they are seen to be vulnerable and requiring protection while simultaneously being criticised for damaging themselves and others. Fleur Gabriel (2014) has argued the damage done by these dominant discourses in the news media are far more damaging to young people than anything they could do to themselves.

Being aware of the social discourses that help shape and define you can empower you. This might not only give you a tremendous personal and professional advantage in future years, but will also help you to be an ethical and collegial global digital citizen who seeks to discover and contribute to solutions, not simply reiterate and reinforce problems.

NOT TODAY - MOVING BEYOND THE END OF THE WORLD:

Pondering the future of digital culture, Royston Martin (2009:160) once wrote of 'the advance of media and technology towards becoming invisible, everywhere and always on'. This is a thought-provoking statement, and the proposed scenario is one that's difficult to argue with. Without more context Martin's description appears to be somewhat 'neutral', yet social media is never thought of in neutral terms. Depending on your point of view, you could interpret Martin to be highlighting in positive terms the growing embrace of digital technologies in many societies for the purpose of 'progress', or its inescapable negative 'encroachment' on these societies in ways that damage them and the people living within them. Being aware of ideological perspectives on social media is crucial, as popular culture and the news media play a pivotal role in influencing people's views.

Finding dystopian representations of people's allegedly fetishistic, voyeuristic, and/or dehumanising obsession(s) with present days social media culture isn't all that difficult. Part of what you need to do this week is exactly this: engage with a representation of online behaviour, smartphone use, etc. and critique the ideological messages put forward in this representation - i.e. what are the views and values being conveyed?

Your reflections don't have to be limited to documentaries or fictional narratives on film or television. A news article or radio segment you have come across might well be influenced by dystopian assumptions and assertions, but you might also think of a book, comic, magazine, advertisement, podcast, or video game. Accusations of 'shallow' and 'narcissistic' behaviour when it comes to activities like taking selfies are a particularly common judgement.

Be aware of how your own personal views and values are interacting with your chosen text(s), as we never come to any media experience as a 'blank slate'. There's nothing wrong with having opinions on digital media culture -whether negative or positive - but critically thinking through the stereotypes and hyperbole is important as well.

There are problems and limitations, but try to avoid moral panics to get to a more balanced perspective. Above all, keep an open mind.

NOTES FROM SLIDES

BUILDING A STUDENT LEARNING COMMUNITY...

'a world where students are making and sharing learning resources, individually and collaboratively, and responding to each other, in the way that YouTube contributors do when a community of enthusiasts create, share, and respond to each other's contributions in a virtuous spiral of learning and development.' - David Gauntlett (2011).

BE(ING) ACTIVE - THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE 'AUDIENCE':

"Web 2.0 blurs the line between producer and consumer and has shifted attention from access to *information* toward access to *people*. New kinds of online resources - such as social networking sites, blogs, wikis, and virtual communities - allow people with common interests to meet, share ideas, and collaborate in innovative ways." - Claudia Grinnell (2009:597).

REPRESENTATIONS OF DIGITAL MEDIA:

It's not hard to find dystopian representations of people's allegedly fetishist, voyeuristic, and/or dehumanising obsession with present day media culture.

Not limited to fictional narratives on film or television. Consider also: journalism, personal communication.

Commons judgements, including accusations of 'shallow' and 'narcissistic' behaviour of young people when taking selfies.

MEDIA EXAMPLES:

- Black Mirror
- Wasted on the Young
- Chatroom
- Westworld
- You
- Disconnect
- Unfriended
- Hacked/The Den
- Friend Request
- The Social Dilemma
- Catfish
- Others?

AT1 INSTRUCTIONS:

This task requires you to submit working hyperlinks to the Twitter profile and Wordpress website you will be using to build and share your portfolio throughout the unit. You must include a brief written reflection on the decisions you have made, your online activity relating to the unit, and the plans you have in relation to your digital presence.

- 400-500 words
- Address the three points in the instructions document
 - Decisions you've made in setting up your Twitter profile and website
 - Evaluation of your engagement with and contribution to the unit so far
 - Plans you have in relation to your online presence in the unit and more broadly
- You may use the first person when writing
- No 10% leeway for overall word count
- No need to have any blogs published on your site yet