

EXAM

Monday, 22 May 2006

@ 4 pm (16.00)

Room 33

Lecture 11
17 May 2006

Global culture and fundamentalism

Review: Culture and G

- **Cultural imperialism** debate gained force soon after decolonisation and the emergence of new postcolonial states in Africa, Asia and the Pacific
- Scholars began speaking of **neo-colonialism**
- Argument about neo-colonialism emphasises the role of the media (esp. television) in the spread of western influence through symbolic and psychological means of control (replacing the former military and political control of colonisers)

Review: Culture and G

- In the early 1970s, less developed countries, led by the non-aligned states, called for a “New World Information Order” against the domination of western media, against the one-way flow of information from rich to poor countries
- The UN (esp. UNESCO) got involved; conferences were held, resolutions were adopted, etc.
- These moves made the world community more aware of the issues but little has actually been done to solve the problems accompanying the international flow of information

Review: Culture and G

- Cultural imperialism thesis argues for changes in global media industries & for restructuring global media along more egalitarian lines (Sean MacBride & Colleen Roach “The New International Information Order”)
- Challenges to cultural imperialism thesis question whether the Third World is really as dominated by the cultural imperialism of the West as was assumed (John Sinclair, Elizabeth Jacka, Stuart Cunningham “Peripheral Vision”)
- Analysis and critique of cultural imperialism thesis shows that cultural homogenisation is indeed growing but this does not mean the end of cultural diversity (John Tomlinson “Cultural Imperialism”)
- One such example is the inability of Hollywood to penetrate the Hindi film market, faced with a great competitor in Bollywood (Heather Tyrrell “Bollywood versus Hollywood”)

Cultural globalisation and fundamentalist responses

Global culture & global fundamentalism

- Pessimistic hyperglobalisers; e.g. Benjamin Barber “Jihad vs. McWorld”
- BB warns against the cultural imperialism of the so-called “McWorld”: a product of superficial American popular culture, driven by expansionist commercial interests; a soulless consumer capitalism, rapid transformation of the world’s diversity into a blandly uniform market
- Colonising tendencies of McWorld provoke resistance in the form of so-called “Jihad”: religious fundamentalisms and ethnonationalisms that represent the ‘dark side’ of cultural particularism; Jihad means the parochial impulse to reject the homogenising forces of the West
- Jihad and McWorld are interdependent

Global culture & global fundamentalism

- Samuel P. Huntington: “The Clash of Civilizations”
- He proposes that the “fundamental source of conflict in this new world will (...) occur between nations and groups of different civilizations.”
- The world is divided into several different civilizations, with often irreconcilable worldviews, who struggle with one another and resist becoming one global culture (no one universal civilization)
- The differences among civilizations are “basic”
- Huntington’s idea has been very influential, controversial, it received wide response and many criticisms

Fundamentalism

- Fundamentalism = in essence means literal understanding, interpretation of religious texts; belief that the religious texts are infallible and historically correct
- The term originates from the US and is connected to Protestant Christianity; 1909: publication of a set of books named “Fundamentals” (the literal text of the Bible and the “fundamentals” of Christian beliefs, e.g. Creationism, the Virgin Birth) → these Christians called themselves “fundamentalists”
- The term became widely used because of the Fundamentalist – Modernist controversy & the Scopes (“monkey”) trial in 1925

Fundamentalism and Islam

- Islamic fundamentalism came into widespread use because of Iran's revolution of 1979 (Islamic Republic) and its wide media coverage
- The use of fundamentalism in connection with Islam spread rapidly and consequently even entered dictionary definitions of F:
- F = “the strict maintenance of traditional Protestant beliefs” but also “strict maintenance of ancient or fundamental doctrines of any religion, especially Islam” (Concise Oxford English Dictionary)

Fundamentalism and Islam

- Fundamentalists or Islamists?
- “fundamentalism equals Islam equals everything-we-must-now-fight-against, as we did with communism during the Cold War” (Edward Said)
- Late 1970s, France: “Islamism” to describe the new Islamic movements; by the mid-1980s increasingly used to mean Islam as a modern ideology and a political programme

Fundamentalism and globalisation

- G challenges people to identify themselves, to place themselves in the world
- “Global fundamentalism” as a reaction against modernity, but with global implications: fundamentalism is seen as a form of antimodernism but F is in fact “a quintessentially modern phenomenon” (Frank J. Lechner “Global Fundamentalism”)
- Collective identities are challenged and enhanced at the same time; globalisation unifies and separates; it creates similarity and difference