

All

SEMINAR 4

News & Media

Task 1 – Read the quotes, discuss your views with a partner, and present to the class.

1 "The news and truth are not the same thing." – Walter Lippmann, American journalist (1889-1974)

2 "When everyone is thinking the same, no one is thinking." – John Wooden, American basketball coach (1920 -)

3 "By the end of the millennium, five men controlled the world's media, and the people rejoiced¹, because their TVs told them to." – Michael Moore, American documentary filmmaker (1954 -)

4 "Propaganda is to a democracy what violence is to a dictatorship." – William Blum, 20thC author of Rogue State

5 "By giving us the opinions of the uneducated, journalism keeps us in touch with the ignorance of the community." – Oscar Wilde, Irish writer (1854-1900)

6 "Television could perform a great service in mass education, but there's no indication² its sponsors have anything like this on their minds. " – Tallulah Bankhead, American actress (1903–1968)

7 "We live in oppressive³ times. We have, as a nation, become our own thought police; but instead of calling the process by which we limit our expression of dissent⁴ and wonder "censorship", we call it "concern for commercial viability⁵". – David Mamet, American playwright (1947 -)

8 "Newspapers are unable, seemingly, to discriminate between a bicycle accident and the collapse of civilization." – George Bernard Shaw, Irish playwright and critic (1856-1950)

Task 2 – Match the concepts below with the five particular media.

Radio * TV *** Magazine *** Newspaper *** Internet**

1. Passive consumption⁶ by the viewer.
2. A public, co-operative, and self-sustaining⁷ facility.
3. Visual as well as audio broadcasting.
4. Specifically targets⁸ segments of the public.
5. The audience has a chance to reread and think about material.
6. Active consumption⁵ by the user.
7. Can reach broad audiences rapidly.
8. The short lifespan⁹ of one issue limits rereading.
9. No central command¹⁰.
10. Potentially has the largest range of audiences.
11. Can reach audiences on the move.
12. Can offer more factual, detailed, and rational message delivery.
13. Various formats, more specific audience targeting⁸.
14. Easy audience access to in-depth issue coverage¹¹ is possible.
15. Audio alone may make messages less interesting.
16. Use of Hypertexts (an instant cross-referencing¹² method).

Task 3 – Discussion questions

1. How would you define the term mass media?
2. What are your preferred sources of information? Do you trust one source over another? Why?
3. How would you compare and rate¹³ different media in this country?
4. How do they compare with foreign media?
5. Do you know who owns or controls the mass media in this country?
6. How serious is the issue of media ownership concentration? What problems could arise?
7. What do you think is the “societal purpose” of the media?

What are the mass media? They're huge corporations, massive corporations, linked up with even bigger corporations. They sell audiences to other businesses, namely advertisers. So when you turn on the television set, CBS doesn't make any money from you; they make money from the advertisers. *You're the product* that they're selling, and the same is true of the daily newspapers. They're huge corporations, selling audiences, potential consumers, to other businesses, all linked up closely to the government, especially the big media. What picture of the world do you expect them to present?

– Noam Chomsky, American writer, linguist, and dissident (1928 -), in Sparrow Talks with Noam Chomsky

From <http://www.newspackdictionary.com/ot-quotes.html#QMedia>, viewed on April 15, 2003; and <http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com>.

Reading – Manufacturing Consent¹⁴

1 In contrast to the standard idea of the media as searching for truth and being independent of authority, we have applied a *propaganda model* that sees the media as serving a “**societal purpose**”. However, this does not enable the public to take control of the political process by giving them information needed to take on intelligent political responsibilities. On the contrary, a *propaganda model* suggests that the “societal purpose” of the media is to support the economic, social, and **political agenda** of privileged groups that dominate society. The media serve this purpose in many ways: through their selection of topics, framing of issues¹⁵, filtering of information, emphasis and tone, and by keeping debate within certain limits. The U.S. media do not function like the propaganda system of a totalitarian state. Rather, they permit, even encourage debate and criticism, as long as they remain *within* the system of principles that form an **elite consensus**, a system so powerful as to be unconsciously¹⁶ accepted.

2 In the process, the media provide neither facts nor analyses that would enable the public to understand the issues of government policy; this assures that the public cannot have any *real* influence on decisions. This is quite typical of the actual “societal purpose” of the media on matters that are important to the establishment; *not* “enabling the public to have control over the political process,” but rather avoiding¹⁷ such danger. Thus, the public is managed from above by means of the media's selective messages and evasions¹⁸. Media analyst W. Lance Bennett notes, “the public hears powerful persuasive¹⁹ messages from above but is unable to respond. Leaders have taken over political power and reduced²⁰ popular control over the political system by using the media to **generate support, compliance**²¹, and just plain confusion among the public.”

3 Media analyst Ben Bagdikian says that the **institutional bias**²² of the private mass media “does not only protect the corporate system, it robs²³ the public of a chance to understand the real world.” Basically, the private media are major corporations selling a product (readers and audiences) to other businesses (advertisers). The national media **typically target**⁸ and serve elite opinion – groups that provide an optimal “profile” for advertising purposes, and play a role in decision-making. The national media would be failing²⁴ to meet the needs of this elite audience if they did not present a tolerably realistic picture of the world. But their “societal purpose” also requires that the media interpretation of the world reflect the interests of the sellers, buyers, and governmental and private institutions dominated by these elites.

4 There are other factors that induce obedience²⁵. A journalist who does not want to have to work too hard can survive by publishing information from standard sources; however, these may be denied²⁶ to those who do not pass on the “state propaganda” as fact. The structure of the media **compels adherence**²⁷ to

conventional thoughts: nothing more can be expressed between two commercials, or in 700 words, without appearing absurd. This is difficult when challenging familiar doctrine with no real chance to develop facts or arguments. As such, the U.S. media are different from those in other industrial democracies, and the consequences are noticeable in the narrowness of expressed opinion and analysis. The critic must also be prepared to **face a defamation apparatus**²⁸ with little protection. The result is a powerful system of induced conformity²⁹ to the needs of privilege and power.

5 In sum, the mass media of the U. S. are effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry out a system-supporting propaganda function by **reliance on market forces**, internalized assumptions³⁰, and self-censorship, but without direct force. This propaganda system has become even more efficient in recent decades with the rise of national television networks, greater mass-media concentration, right-wing pressures on public radio and television, and the growth in the **scope and sophistication** of public relations and news management.

Task 4 – Find the equivalents of the phrases below in the text above.

- 1 range and cultivation – _____
- 2 to deal with the legal libel system – _____
- 3 governmental policies – _____
- 4 aim of society – _____
- 5 dependence on commercial factors – _____
- 6 usually focus on – _____
- 7 the prejudice or perspective of the establishment – _____
- 8 create agreement and obedience²⁵ – _____
- 9 agreement amongst the wealthy and powerful – _____
- 10 strongly encourages the following of standard ideas – _____

Task 5 – Comprehension questions

- 1 What is the “societal purpose” of the media in the *propaganda model*?
- 2 How is the public influenced from above by the media?
- 3 In paragraph 2, what is the danger that is referred to?
- 4 Who is in the elite group that the media typically target?
- 5 How does the structure of the media limit journalists?
- 6 Why does the media not need to use direct force or censorship?

Manufacturing Consent by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, Pantheon Books, 1988. Viewed at http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Herman%20Conclusions_ManufacConsent.html on 23.4.2003.

Task 6 – Television News

*Is there anything that shouldn't be shown on the TV news? What are the limits? Who sets them?
Look at the two opinions on television news. What is your reaction to their ideas?*

1 “The public has a right to know what’s happening. I think they should not cut out anything. People are mature³¹ enough to take in the reality of what happens in the world every day.”

2 “TV news sometimes seems more like a show. They want a bigger audience so they show shocking or provocative images. TV news should report the news, not try to shock people.”

1. Can you think of an example of something sensational appearing on the news? How did you feel?
2. How is this type of censorship harmful³² or beneficial³³?

Task 7 – Discussion questions

1. Is censorship a “necessary evil”³⁴?
2. Are there any forms of censorship that most societies consider to be necessary, and even beneficial?
3. What do you know about censorship in your own country?
4. Is systematic under-reporting³⁵ of news a form of censorship?
5. How and why does this happen? Do you know what “compassion fatigue”³⁶ could mean?
6. Why do you think that the following stories are considered under-reported³⁵ by the Nobel Peace Prize-winning international relief agency Doctors without Borders? What do many of them have in common?

The 10 Most Underreported Humanitarian Crises of 2001

1. Burundi: Devastating Malaria Epidemic
2. Chechnya: Displaced³⁷ Chechens Living in Horrible Conditions in Ingushetia
3. China: North Korean Refugees³⁸ Face Persecution
4. Colombia: Rural Violence and Urban Marginalization
5. Democratic Republic of Congo: Complete Breakdown in Healthcare
6. Neglected Diseases: Death Toll on the Rise
7. Refugees and Displaced: Protection Increasingly Violated
8. Somalia: Enduring Needs in War-Ravaged Country
9. Sri Lanka: Chronic Conflict Impacts Health and Mental Well-Being
10. West Africa: Massive Crisis of Displaced People

Task 8 – Listening – Newshour Interview

*Despite coverage¹¹ of Afghanistan, a new survey³⁹ by the group **Doctors Without Borders** finds a long list of key stories receiving little or no coverage in the U.S. media. Terence Smith discusses some of these stories with the executive director of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning group. (4.3.2002)*

TERENCE SMITH: International reporting has been an endangered species⁴⁰ on American television and in U.S. newspapers in 1 _____ years, until September 11. Suddenly the world 2 _____ our borders was news, and reporters were dispatched⁴¹ to 3 _____ corners of the globe.

Doctors without Borders says violations of the international conventions governing the 4 _____ of the estimated 45 million refugees worldwide only intensified. In these 5 _____, the organization argues, no news does not mean good news.

To discuss the list and its implications, we're joined by Nicholas de Torrente, the executive director of Doctors without Borders. Welcome to you. What do you hope to 6 _____ by putting out this list of underreported stories?

NICHOLAS DE TORRENTE, *Executive Director, Doctors Without Borders*: Well, our field 7 _____, doctors, are dealing with very difficult situations. They're trying to provide assistance to people in very dire circumstances⁴², and sometimes 8 _____ assistance is just not enough, and what we hope to accomplish⁴³ and what we think is our real responsibility is to try to raise awareness about some of these 9 _____, the plight of the people⁴⁴ that we're trying to help, raise awareness about them, provoke greater understanding of their situation and a healthier and more 10 _____ public debate around these situations. It's really, for us, a precondition to any kind of meaningful action, political action in particular, that can help 11 _____ and address these terrible situations that we are dealing with in the field.

TERENCE SMITH: Some sort of coverage as a precondition?

NICHOLAS DE TORRENTE: That's right, and we have been increasingly 12 _____ over the years in terms of what we've perceived to be a 13 _____ in coverage, particularly of some of the issues that we've tried to highlight in this list of ten underreported stories every year.

TERENCE SMITH: Given the gravity⁴⁵ of these stories, why do you think they are underreported?

NICHOLAS DE TORRENTE: Well, I think there's a little bit of a vicious circle⁴⁶ here. The media 14 _____ that the American public is not really interested in these types of issues, in foreign stories, of people far away from the United States, and therefore devotes very little resources and attention to them. The coverage, therefore, is limited, and therefore the ratings are low; and if the ratings are low, you know, this does not give any 15 _____ to news organizations to devote more attention and resources. So we're trapped in a bit of a vicious cycle⁴⁶ here.

TERENCE SMITH: There's been a great deal of speculation about the 16 _____ of September 11 on all sorts of society and all sorts of problems. What about this? Has it served at all as a wake-up call⁴⁷ towards more coverage of stories like these?

NICHOLAS DE TORRENTE: Well, I think that the coverage of Afghanistan in particular has showed us really that some of the basic assumptions³⁰ behind the 17 _____ of coverage in general is wrong; that, you know, Americans are very hungry for, for international news. They're very hungry for the type of knowledge and information about these types of 18 _____.

TERENCE SMITH: Of course in Afghanistan American troops⁴⁸ were involved. Is that the formula: Where there are troops, there's coverage?

NICHOLAS DE TORRENTE: Well, of course the media went to report on the anti-terrorist campaign and the military efforts⁴⁹, and people were very interested in that, but I think what happened is that, although the 19 _____ situation, the humanitarian situation was covered a little bit as a sideshow in the beginning, it really did catch on in terms of people's, you know, awareness and attention, and that people became very interested in that, and it became a real story in its own right, and for us, that's a very 20 _____ sign.

TERENCE SMITH: You know, there was a book a couple years ago, came out with the title Compassion Fatigue, and I wonder if that's 21 _____ here. Is there simply too much for people to take in like this?

NICHOLAS DE TORRENTE: Well, Terence, I don't think so. I think the issue really is the type of coverage and, you know, what you can get out of it. If you have very quick, 22 _____ coverage of what are very difficult, complex issues, then of course the people will sort of turn off and blank out and will not be interested, and you'll see sort of an ongoing litany of anarchy, chaos, crisis without rhyme or 23 _____.

However, if do you look at issues and put resources and attention to them and sort of try to understand them, then people will catch on, and you'll see not only the human side of it that does grab people⁵⁰, and there is a 24 _____ that is established, but also the fact that we are connected to these stories, and I think that's maybe also a hopeful thing about September 11, if there can be one, is that there's a sort of a 25 _____ of what is, you know, this American 26 _____ that the news organizations tend⁵¹ to look for.

We are starting to really understand that we are connected in so many different ways to crisis situations and to people who are very far away from us, and if you go into 27 _____ and look and have a quality reporting, I think you will 28 _____ this compassion fatigue, which is really 29 _____ to superficial⁵² and, you know, coverage that doesn't go into the issues in 30 _____.

TERENCE SMITH: Nicholas de Torrente, thank you very much.

NICHOLAS DE TORRENTE: You're very welcome. Thank you for having me.

Comprehension questions

1. What does the old saying "No news is good news" refer to traditionally and in this text?
2. What is the nature of the "vicious circle" that De Torrente describes?
3. What aspect of the war in Afghanistan were Americans primarily interested in?
4. How was reporting about September 11 hopeful?
5. How can compassion fatigue be overcome?

Task 9 – Grammar – Passive Voice

Journalistic style, shared by both print and broadcast, uses active voice (the verb in the sentence describes some action that the subject is doing) as much as possible; however, passive voice (to be + past participle) is often used as well (in a sentence with a passive voice verb, the subject of the sentence is receiving not doing the action).

Exercise 1 – Change the passive into the active voice and vice versa.

Examples:

The affair was admitted by the president.

The president admitted the affair.

Bomb attacks damaged the premises.

The premises were damaged by bomb attacks.

1. Militants carried out attacks on journalists with impunity⁵³.

Attacks _____.

2. The courts will have banned⁵⁴ more than 30 papers by then.

By then, more than _____.

3. Government officials launched⁵⁵ the new employment programme today.

Today _____.

4. He has jailed some outspoken journalists.

Some journalists _____.

5. Having been rescued by the lifeguard, the bather was taken to hospital by an ambulance.

After the lifeguard _____.

6. The Gazprom coup had shut down a Moscow daily.

A Moscow daily _____.

7. China is pouring huge resources into policing.

Huge resources _____.

8. The square may be crowded with thousands of demonstrators tonight.

Thousands of demonstrators _____.

9. The European Commission yesterday proposed doubling aid to Turkey.

Doubling aid to Turkey _____.

10. Independent News has announced plans to reduce its high debt levels.

Plans to reduce its high debt levels _____.

Exercise 2

Complete the sentences using active or passive voice of the suggested verbs.

1. The Guardian _____ all over Britain. (read)

2. When we join the EU, a lot of Czech people _____ in Brussels. (employ)

3. The thief would have continued to steal if he _____. (catch)

4. Fifteen years after kicking a two-packets-a-day habit to improve his presidential hopes, Jacques Chirac _____ a "war on tobacco" yesterday. (launch)

5. The Court of Appeal _____ Giulietta Atkinson, 56, £90,000 for trauma she suffered when her daughter _____ by a car. (award, kill)

Vocabulary

1. to rejoice	radovat se
2. indication (sign)	znamení, náznak
3. oppressive	potlačující
4. dissent	nesouhlas
5. concern for viability	zájem o schopnost růstu
6. *consumption	spotřeba
7. self-sustaining facility	samostatné, nezávislé, soběstačné zařízení
8. *to target	zaměřit se na
9. lifespan	životnost
10. *command	ovládání
11. *coverage	pokrytí, zpravodajství, reportáže
12. cross-reference	odkaz, opatřit odkazy
13. to rate	zařadit, ohodnotit
14. *consent	souhlas
15. framing of issues	sestavení otázek
16. *unconsciously	nevědomě
17. *to avoid	vyhnout se
18. evasion	vytáčka, výmluva
19. *persuasive	přesvědčivý
20. *to reduce popular control	snižit kontrolu veřejnosti
21. compliance	shoda
22. bias	zaujatost, předsudky
23. to rob of	okrást o
24. *failing to meet the needs of...	nevyjít vstříc potřebám něčeho
25. to induce obedience	přimět k poslušnosti
26. *to deny	zamítnout, odmítnout
27. to compel adherence	přinutit k věrnosti
28. to face a defamation apparatus	čelit právnímu systému ohledně hanobení a pomluv
29. to induce conformity	vynutit souhlas
30. *assumption	domněnka, předpoklad
31. *mature	dospělý
32. *harmful	škodlivý
33. *beneficial	prospěšný
34. *evil	zlo
35. to under-report	nedostatečně informovat
36. compassion	soucit
37. fatigue	únava, vyčerpanost
38. displaced people	lidé vyhnání z domova, z vlasti
39. refugee	uprchlík
40. *survey	průzkum
41. an endangered species	ohrožený druh
42. to dispatch	poslat
43. dire circumstances	strašné podmínky
44. *to accomplish	dosáhnout, splnit
45. plight	situace
46. the gravity of these stories	závažnost těchto příběhů
47. to be trapped in a vicious cycle/circle	uvíznout v začarovaném kruhu
48. a wake-up call, warning	výzva, varování
49. troops, soldiers	vojsko
50. military efforts	vojenské úsilí
51. to "grab" people	chytit, přilákat lidi
52. *to tend to look for	mít sklon, tendenci hledat
53. *superficial	povrchní
54. impunity	beztretnost
55. *to ban	zakázat
56. to launch a programme	zahájit program