



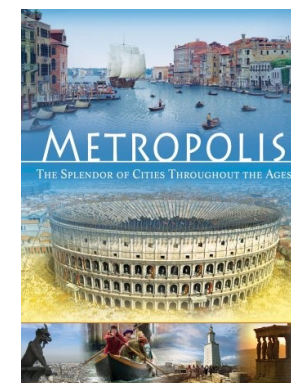
MEDIA INDUSTRIES, LABOUR AND PRODUCTION

LECTURE 1 – WHY STUDY MEDIA INDUSTRIES AND MEDIA PRODUCTION

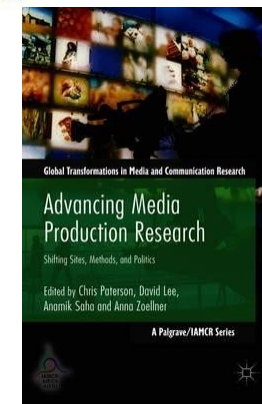
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MY BACKGROUND

- MA Media and Communication, Cultural Science, Theatre Studies (University of Leipzig)
- Production Manager, Producer and Assistant Director in Television Production (documentary)
- PhD about the development of TV documentaries in independent production companies in UK and Germany (University of Leeds)
- Lecturer in Media Industries, University of Leeds
 - Research interests at the intersection of cultural/media industries, media production research, television studies, and critical cultural labour studies. Methodological interest in comparative and ethnographic research.



THE COMPLETE 7-PART SERIES ON 2 DVDS



THIS WEEK

Day 1: Media Industries

- What are the media industries? How can we define and characterise them?
Why and how should we study the media industries?

Day 2: Media Work

- What are key characteristics and working conditions of media labour markets?
How can we explain and understand media workers responses to these conditions?

Day 3: Media Production Research

- How can we study media production in the field? What are methodological challenges? What does media production research look like in practice?

WHY STUDY THE MEDIA INDUSTRIES?

- *Culture* – media representations inform our knowledge and understanding of the world and ourselves; they shape our perceptions of ourselves and others and are used to express ourselves and our views
 - *Labour* – media production and distribution provides employment and income for a significant number of people, it is particular type of work, and it extends beyond forms of conventional, paid employment
 - *Economy* – media industries are a source of wealth (for some) and as such of interest for policy and business
- What kind of representations exist? Why these and not others? Who benefits from these representations and who is excluded? What and who shapes their content and form? Who is creating media texts and under what conditions? Who has economic and political power to shape these conditions? How do economic and cultural dimensions of media industries interact? Etc

SIX UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

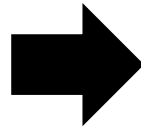
1) To understand the media industries, we need to understand *the media*

- A *medium* is an intermediate channel or agency through which communication takes place
- The *media* [plural of medium] are those social institutions through which large-scale communication takes place
- “In all societies, human beings engage in the production and exchange of information, knowledge and symbolic content” (John B. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity*, 1995)

MEDIA AND MODERNITY

Modernity: Transformation of media and communication

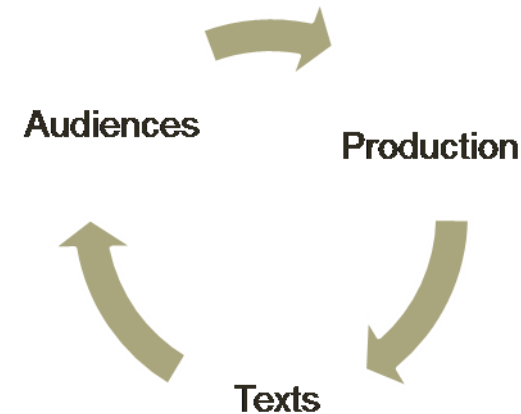
- Larger-scale production
 - Dispersed in time and space
 - Increasingly bought and sold
- to examine the media industries is to examine the (changing) production and exchange of information and symbolic content



PRODUCTION

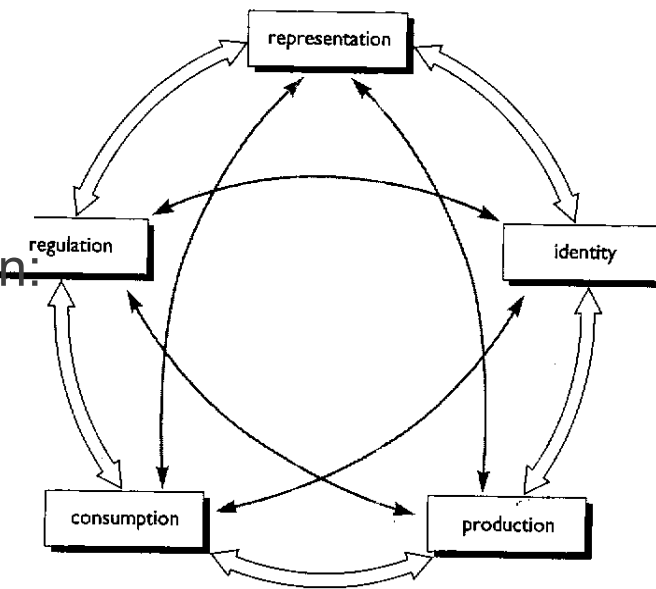
The Media 'Triangle' in Research:

- Production
- Texts
- Audiences



When focusing on media industries, the emphasis is on production:

- Production: the process of bringing something into being
- Industries: organised institutions that produce and circulate goods and services



The circuit of culture

ASSUMPTIONS

(2) To understand the media industries, we need to understand modern, capitalist production

(3) We need to examine how the media industries are similar to and different from other industries



ASSUMPTIONS

(4) an emphasis on the importance of *culture*

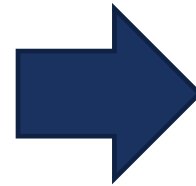
Cultural industries are those involved in the production of culture ...

...but what *is* culture?

- Culture (for our purposes) = information, knowledge, symbolic content: attempts by humans to create *meaning* (rather than functionality)

ASSUMPTIONS

5) The importance of history



TRANSFORMATION OF CULTURE AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION

- Modernity: commodification, mass production, dispersed in time and space...
- Central debate: What are the effects of these changes on culture?
- More specifically: To what degree does commodification enhance and/or damage culture and therefore human experience?



Simplistic (stupid) versions of this debate:

→ Culture is always harmed by commerce/the market:
'All pop music is bad because it's made by big business.'

→ There is no problem with commerce:
'If people didn't like rubbish, they wouldn't buy it.'

- More useful to look at tensions, contradictions and reconciliations between culture/creativity/art, on the one hand, and industry/commerce/economics, on the other.

ASSUMPTIONS

(6) The media are also important because of their potential *power* to shape the way that we think about the world, our societies and ourselves

- 'Ideology' or influence → The media industries represent concentrations of power



SUMMARY OF ASSUMPTIONS

To understand the media industries, we need to understand:

- *the media*
- modern, capitalist *production*
- how the media industries are *similar to* and *different from* other industries
- the concept of *culture*
- processes of historical *change* (and *continuity*)
- the potential *power* and influence of the media

DEFINITION (AND ALTERNATIVE TERMS)

- Cultural industries are “those institutions that are most **directly involved** in the production of social meaning”. Their activities have “the **primary aim** (...) to communicate to an audience, to create and disseminate texts”. (Hesmondhalgh 2019:14, my emphasis)
- Can include non-media cultural productions: theatre, opera, museums and galleries
- Media industries are the *core* cultural industries: biggest in revenue and influence (see Hesmondhalgh 2019:15 for a list of industries), their main purpose is production and circulation on industrial scale
- A new variant of this term: “creative industries”
- Definition extended to include pottery, architecture and IT – includes industries that are borderline cases, for whom textual/symbolic production is not the primary aim

HOW TO STUDY THE MEDIA INDUSTRIES? – SOME THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Central issues in media research concern the meaning and power of media within society:

- What role do the media play in sustaining existing power relations?
- What role can the media play in driving social and cultural change?
- Can we put too much emphasis on media influence?

Tensions in media research:

- Production of Consumption?
- News media/factual or popular culture and entertainment?
- Media policy or understanding the everyday experience of the media?
- Politics of redistribution or recognition?

MEDIA ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL STUDIES

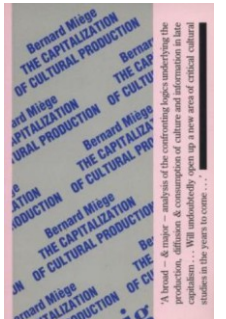
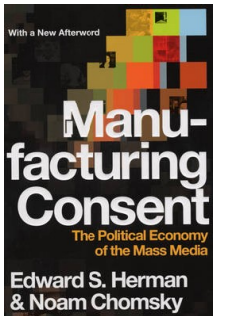
- Focus on scientific study of economic affairs/markets
- Human wellbeing as meeting human preferences
- Facilitates neoliberal approach to culture
- Concerned with efficiency, cost-reduction, profit-maximisation
- Analytical interest: “how to advise businesses on how to best achieve success in business terms, for example by maximising revenues and efficiency” (Hesmondhalgh 2019: 60)
- Critique: Neglects other perspectives incl. potential conflicts and tensions in media production, social and cultural implications of commercial media production, ethical questions of power and justice

(CRITICAL) POLITICAL ECONOMY AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES APPROACH

- Focuses on the relation between the structure of the media and its output (particularly the relation between the media and capitalism)
- Normative approach: committed to ethical questions, social justice and equality → Politics of redistribution (influenced by Marxist critiques of capitalism)
- Macro approach, emphasis on structure
- Research focus: regulation, production and distribution of media content with particular attention to economic forces including...
 - Media ownership
 - Media conglomeration
 - Media concentration
- Critique:
 - Ignores individual agency, complexities and contradictions of cultural production
 - Lack of interest in media text or, for that matter, popular culture and entertainment

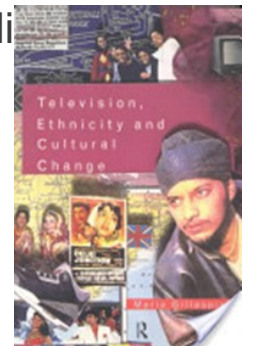
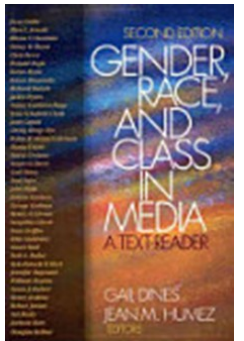
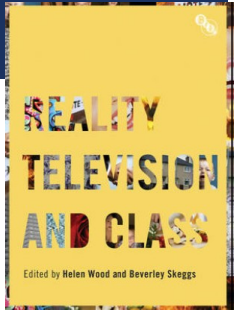
(CRITICAL) POLITICAL ECONOMY AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES APPROACH

- North America: Schiller-McChesney Tradition (e.g. Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model)
 - Emphasises strategic use of power by corporate and state-run media
 - Emphasis on politics and praxis
 - Characterised by exhaustive documenting and cataloguing work
 - “What enters the mainstream will support the needs of established power.” (Chomsky, Necessary Illusions 1989: 59)
- Western Europe: Cultural Industries Approach (e.g. Bernard Miège, Nicholas Garnham)
 - Improvement of Adorno and Horkheimer's (Frankfurt School) cultural pessimism in “The Culture Industry” (Early critique of commercial mass production of popular culture (1940s))
 - Emphasises problems/contradictions contestation and ambivalence in cultural production
 - Includes investigation of cultural producers and entertainment and specific conditions of cultural production
 - “Cultural Production as complex, ambivalent and contested” (Hesmondhalgh 2019: 58)



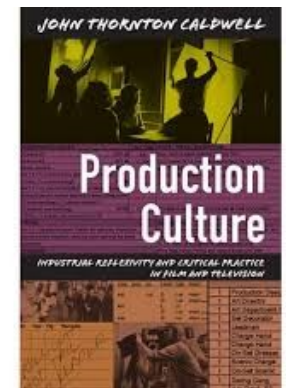
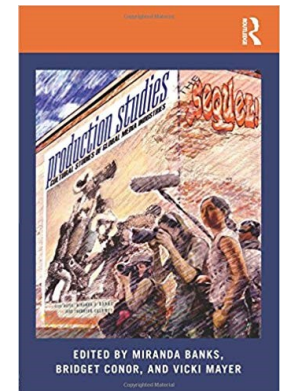
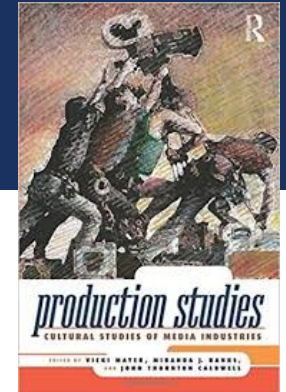
CULTURAL STUDIES

- Focuses on the relation between culture and social power
- Normative approach: committed to ethical questions about culture, meaning and power → Politics of representation
- Micro approach, emphasis on agency
- Research focus: whose voice is heard (recognised) in society (and whose isn't)...
 - Everyday culture including popular culture and entertainment
 - Subjectivity, identity, discourse
 - Analysis of textual representation and audience reception (e.g. gender, race, class, religion, sexuali...)
- Critique:
 - Lacks empirical engagement
 - Not particularly focused on cultural **production** itself – but encouraged turn to cultural labour
 - Politically conservative?



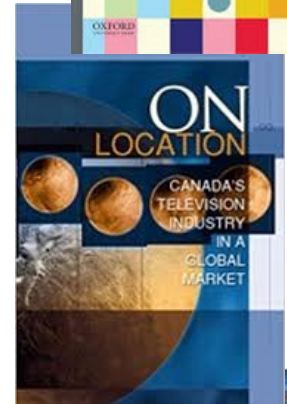
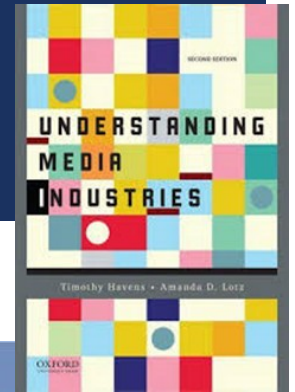
PRODUCTION STUDIES

- Application of cultural studies in study of cultural (mostly media) production
- Micro approach
- Production studies “take the lived realities of people involved in media production as the subjects for theorizing production as culture” (Mayer et al. 2009: 4)
- Emphasis on the perspective of media workers “on the ground” and analysis of their experiences, observations, conversations, and interactions
- Strategies of media industries, corporations or governments only insofar of interest as they affect media workers



CRITICAL MEDIA INDUSTRIES STUDIES

- Synthesis of cultural industries studies and cultural studies with influences from critical sociology and political economy
- Middle-range theory
- Emphasis on complex interplay of economic and cultural forces and forms of struggle and compliance within the media industries:
 - “grounded institutional case studies that examine the relationships between *strategies* (here read as the larger economic goals and logics of large-scale cultural industries) and *tactics* (the ways in which cultural workers seek to negotiate, at times perhaps subvert, the constraints imposed by cultural institutional interests to their own purposes)” (Havens et al. 2009: 247)
- Influences:
 - Cultural studies’ emphasis on ordinary/popular culture and everyday practices
 - Giddens’ dialectical relationship between structure and agency and power as operating on multiple levels (structuration theory)
 - Foucauldian conceptualisation of discourse as formation of knowledge (i.e. power) and its internalisation by actors (governmentality theory)



CONCLUSION

- It's not either political economy or cultural studies – not a dichotomy but multiple approaches with different...
 - Objectives and Research Focus/Question
 - Research Subjects and Sites
 - Methods and epistemology
- Research of media industries and production increasingly aims to bridge analytical and methodological divides
- There is no single “correct” theory or approach to studying the media – depends on what you want to find out (and what you value)
- Some key insights:
 - Importance of addressing multiple relevant processes, i.e. production, audiences, texts, policy → link production and text
 - Interdependence of structure and agency
 - Dual role of media industries as both cultural and economic
 - Problems of economic reductionism and determinism