Communication Arts 250

Communication Arts 250

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Contents

Comm Arts 250: Survey of Contemporary Media
Lori Lopez, PhD

Communication Arts 250 | Online Lessons   iii

Introduction

Comm Arts 250: Survey of Contemporary Media

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Communication Arts 250 | Online Lessons

Communication Arts 250: Survey of Contemporary Media

Week 2: How Technology Changes Society

How Technology Changes Society

(Go to the Online Lessons Home page to access a PDF version.)

Introduction Video | Dr. Lori Lopez | 1:14 mins

Introduction video: click to launch or to access from PDF version, copy and paste this URL into your browser: https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Week+2+-+How+Technology+Changes+Society/0_jxkqz17k

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Key Questions

- What is technological determinism and how is this way of thinking expressed?
- Who is Marshall McLuhan and how did he understand technology?
- How did the development of media technologies change society?

  - Literacy
  - Print
  - Photography

- How can media impact the relationship between time and space?

Understanding Technological Determinism

Technological determinism is the idea that technology is the primary driver of our society—technology is what causes cultural and social change, and it shapes human existence. It's the idea that technology is what determines the way that our society develops, and that technology is more significant than other factors.

In today's lesson we're going to spend some time looking at the history of media technologies. Under the perspective of technological determinism, the development of these technologies would be seen to have a profound effect on society. We might even go so far as to think that developments in technology have been the primary driving force influencing the entire course of human history.

Where do we see evidence of this perspective?

### 2001: A Space Odyssey – the Dawn of Man | 9.33 mins (clip)

Watch this scene from the famed Stanley Kubrick film *2001: A Space Odyssey* and think about what message is being conveyed about the relationship between man and technology.
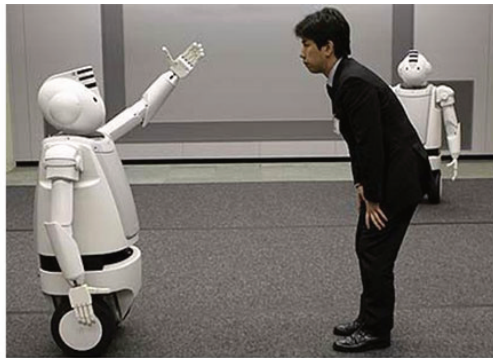
We see the monkeys first as animals, very primitive in the way that they relate to one another and their surroundings. They resolve conflict through testing their physical strength against one another. Then we see the unexplained arrival of something much more technologically advanced than them, a mysterious structure that they reach out to interact with. In the very next scene, the monkey looks at the pile of bones and starts to have a new realization–the bones can be useful to him. He bangs them on the ground and realizes that they enhance his physical strength, perhaps enough for him to physically overpower another creature. The next time that a conflict arises within the group, he uses this newfound technology to assert his dominance. In discovering the tool, he is set upon the journey toward progress and change–and eventually, the evolution from primitive animal into human.

Technology as Defining Quality

This basic sense that humans evolve based on their relation to the development of technologies can be seen in the way that we classify periods in human history. Titles such as "The Stone Age" and "The Bronze Age" clearly emphasize the role of technology in shaping how we think about our own history.
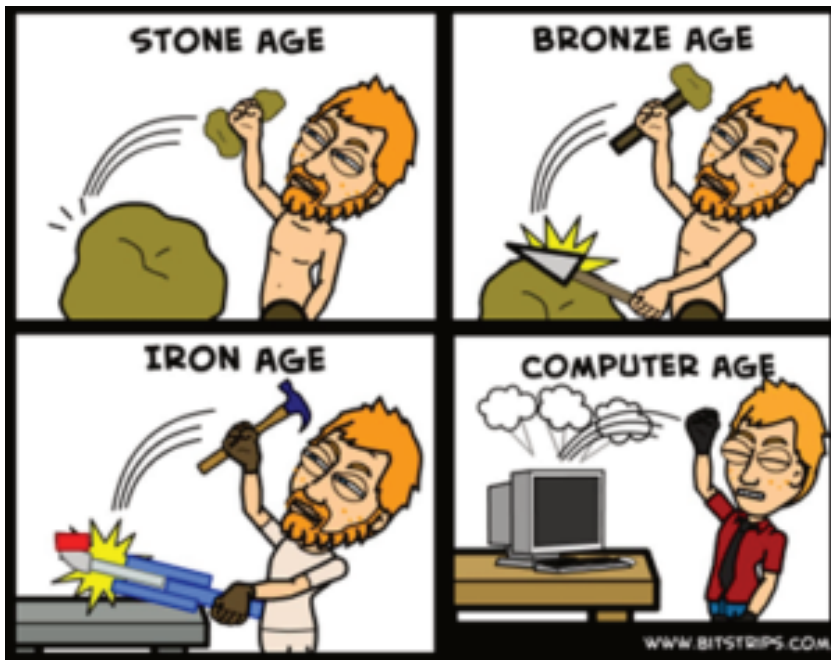
The names we give to the ages are often connected to technology.

Another indicator of how prominently we consider technology can be seen in how closely we connect national identities to technology. Think about the technologies that are associated with certain nations—Japan and robots, Germany and cars, Holland and windmills. This kind of thinking is infused into many different aspects of how we view human history and culture.

National identities closely connect to tech in Japan, Holland, and Germany.

Marshall McLuhan

> ❝ "The medium is the message."

This focus on the centrality of media technologies can clearly be seen in the work of Marshall McLuhan, a public intellectual from Canada who rose to prominence in the 1950s. His work has been connected to ideas of technological determinism, particularly with his famous notion that "The medium is the message."

Watch this clip of McLuhan speaking in a televised interview, and listen to how he describes this idea. What does he mean when he says the medium is the message?

The Medium is the Message – Marshall McLuhan | First 8 mins (clip)

McLuhan video: click to launch or to access from PDF version, copy and paste this URL into your browser:

https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Marshall+Mcluhan+Full+lecture-+The+medium+is+the+message+-+1977+part+1+v+3/0_4whgw2r6/32607362

Let's dig deeper into McLuhan's theories to understand how he came to this understanding of media.

First, McLuhan argues that *all media entail mediation*. This is the idea that the content of any medium is just another medium. For instance, the content of television is moving images and sound; the content of the newspaper is articles or perhaps images; the content of a newspaper article is speech; and the content of speech is thought.

This is why he comes to believe that content is not what is most important, because content can be traced further and further back until it is simply the thoughts in your head.

So if content is not important, what *is* important? McLuhan wants us to be careful not to get blinded by content, or overly fixate on content, but to be aware of how media themselves are shaping our world.

> " "The personal and social consequences of any medium result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology."

As he says in the clip, his belief is that it doesn't matter what you say on the phone, the important thing is that telephone technology is shaping society. The important fact is that everyone has access to telephones and is using them. Similarly, it doesn't matter what kids are reading, the important thing is that they grow to value literacy and stories and education, that they're able to use literacy to accomplish things. Or even bigger, the important thing is the impact that literacy has had on society, and how society was shaped by the advent and spread of literacy. The same is true with television—it's not what is on television that matters, it's the entire technology of television as something different from a radio or a movie that has changed society. We can start to see that he is fairly critical of television in this clip, but we can also understand that his bigger point is that having television as a widespread media technology has clearly impacted all of our lives.

McLuhan calls media *extensions of man* because they extend our senses. They allow us to see and hear and touch things that we otherwise wouldn't have access to. Telephones extend our voice and spreads it influence, movies extend our eyes and ears, the computer extends our brain. If media are seen to be metaphorically part of our bodies and central nervous systems, part of who we are and how we operate in the world, we can see how he thinks it's so important. He believes media and society are closely connected, so we always need to think big picture about the effect that it has on society and human functions.

So when McLuhan says that "The medium is the message," he means that "the message" is the social impact that a technology has, the way it changes the course of human life. It's the medium that changes the way we think, and what is possible. It makes it possible for us to think and to do new things, and that's what we need to pay attention to.

Selected History of Media

To further understand how prevalent discourses of technological determinism are, let's look at a select history of media technologies. This lesson is obviously very limited, because there are many different histories that together tell the story of how our media ecology evolved. But we can point to a few select advances in media technology and discuss what they mean. These will include:

- Literacy
- Print
- Photography

Literacy

Although today we take literacy and our written culture somewhat for granted, writing itself is a technology that needed to be developed over the course of human society. Earliest human societies were oral, relying on spoken language to convey messages and maintain relations over time. Epics like *Beowulf*, or Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* were all transmitted orally from generation to generation.

Although continuous print scroll is one form of writing, it's not the only option.

In the pre-class reading, Levinson describes the special quality of oral communication, where "what is spoken and heard, but unseen, acquires larger-than-life qualities in the re-telling" (p. 25). We can think about what these stories would have meant to us if they were only heard, and we never had the chance to read them or see images of them. But then this kind of experience shifted with the advent of technologies such as the alphabet and the manuscript.

What we think of as "the book" was adopted around 400 AD, but this technology could have developed differently. Before the book, words were recorded on technologies such as long scrolls of continuous print, and hammered tablets. But the technology that stuck was the codex book, which consists of a series of pages bound together at the spine. To access content, readers flip through its pages.

The question we want to think about is, how does the ability to write things down impact society? How does society change because of this technological advancement? Writing was actually met with skepticism when it was introduced, because changing from an oral culture to a written culture was such a huge change. This reminds us that all technological change is difficult and part of a long process because it has such a big impact on society.

The codex book was not developed until 400AD.

Impacts of Literacy on Society:

- Writing distances the speaker from the listener. While oral cultures relied on forging connections with your fellow man, and trusting their expertise, writing distances the speaker from the listener. You no longer need face-to-face contact to spread information. This distance can also entail distrust, or misinformation.

- The development of "virtual" communication, where the speaker didn't need to be present. Documents become the repository for information, rather than people. Written words can disseminate information without needing to rely on person-to-person contact.

- Writing allows for built-upon knowledge. Knowledge is no longer something that is internal to individuals; people can use the information from multiple sources to increase knowledge.

- Training and education become more important and "knowledge classes" become more prominent. This allows for the introduction of concepts such as linear time and recordable histories.

When McLuhan says "the medium is the message," he means that all of these changes are the most important thing. The social impact of the technology of literacy is "the message."

Monopolies of Knowledge

Some of the impact of literacy that extends to all new technologies comes from what Harold Innis calls monopolies of knowledge. This concept refers to the situation when the ruling class possesses communication technologies and keeps them from the masses. They hoard and protect access to technology so they can be the only ones to benefit from it.

One example of this might be the professional jargon that doctors and lawyers use so that everyday citizens can't understand them. On one hand it might be funny how difficult it is to understand what these professionals are saying, but more importantly, it means that regular people can't diagnose their own illnesses or represent themselves within the legal system. They have to pay doctors and lawyers to do give them access to information.

Who says "We need to have synergy…"

Doctors also often speak in an alien tongue

To bring this back to our discussion of literacy—at its most basic level, literacy is a technology that was kept from the masses. When print was first developed, scribes were the only ones who knew how to read and write, so they wielded enormous power in society. At various times in history there has been an effort to make sure everyone can read and has access to information, and then there have been times when access to information has been severely limited. We can see this even today—in certain countries, portions of the internet are censored and made inaccessible, while in others the internet is seen as something that must be opened up to everyone equally. So as with all media technologies, it's important to always ask who benefits and who is held back by access and knowledge.

Print

The printing press is another important technological advance. In 600 A.D. we saw the invention of the Chinese printing press, where books were being printed with woodblock prints. Around 1045, movable type was invented—though, because the Chinese written language consists of over 10,000 characters, it didn't really catch on. In the 1450s, Johannes Gutenberg invented his printing press, with the 26 letters of the alphabet in metal on wooden frames. They were covered with an oil-based ink and then pressed onto paper with a large hand-cranked press. By 1500, printing presses and mass-produced books were commonplace. In fact, over 20 million books had been printed before 1500.

More Monopolies of Knowledge

Another example of a monopoly of knowledge in the early era of writing was that priests and religious leaders were the first to learn how to read and write, and that training was kept for only them.This made it of course difficult to challenge the power of the church, because normal people didn't have access to sacred writings. Before the print era, The Roman Catholic Church in particular was enormously powerful and controlled the majority of wealth across Europe. It had a significant influence over society and commerce, largely because it had control over written texts as well as visual arts.

Religious leaders learned how to read, but kept that knowledge exclusive so that they could maintain their power.

But then Martin Luther came along and was a leader of the protestant reformation in the 1500s. One of his central ideas was that people should be able to read the Bible themselves, not requiring church officials to read it to them. He translated the Bible into vernacular German instead of Latin in order to make it accessible to the people. One of the first things that Gutenberg published with his printing press was the Bible, and it was said to have started the Gutenberg Revolution. So the Protestant Reformation coincided with the availability of Bibles and the ability of ordinary people to read them and develop their own relationship to their faith that wasn't mediated through clergy and the church. This was a huge blow to the power of the churches, who could no longer control knowledge—and as a result, lost some of their political power as well.

Public Education

With the accessibility of printed materials, it becomes important to teach common people how to read. The level of literacy among all social classes grew exponentially, creating a literate culture. Farmers could keep track of weather, merchants could keep track of purchases and sales, citizens could write contracts with their fellow citizens.

Literacy training and a more literate population also contributed to the rise of science and the scientific method. This is the notion that ideas should be tested and those tests should be recorded, rather than just trusting a smart person who claims something. Scientists could convey to each other how they had been testing ideas, and then once those ideas are proven accurate, they could be disseminated to the public and recorded for history. Even after the scientists and authors had died, their ideas could live on.

Public school systems were important tools for conveying literacy and writing.

Literacy and access to printed works also help to create an informed electorate. The press could convey ideas about the state and how it was being run, and citizens could form opinions about what was going on. They didn't just have to blindly trust what their leaders told them in public gatherings.

Effects of Print Technologies

- Mass communication is born

- Democratization of knowledge—normal people can have access to books and other texts. Normal people can also write their own books and spread that information to the masses.

- Development of journalism and advertising. Not necessarily the birth of advertising, newspapers started to provide a reliable new way of conveying ads to the masses

- Rise of public education

- Science flourishes

- Knowledge becomes more of a commodity. Also there is a shift in how we view knowledge; it's not just something the elites possess and maintain, it's something that someone can put into a book and then sell for money

- Prices increase for producers and decreases for consumer—more people can buy books and newspapers and pamphlets

Photography

Photography emerged in the 1830s with the daguerreotype—let's watch a brief video describing the process of developing a daguerreotype.

The Daguerreotype – Photographic Processes | 6:32 mins

Daguerreotype Process video: click to launch or to access from PDF version, copy and paste this URL into your browser:

https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/The+Daguerreotype-+Photographic+Processes/0_m7pnyy4i/32607362

After this photographic process was invented, there were many more advances that followed. Photographers were able to reduce the time of exposure, take pictures on film, print pictures on paper, and other improvements. But the idea of seeing the very first photographic image is still a profound one—it's a practice that changes forever how you see yourself, how you see history, how you see the world.

Images from the Civil War helped to convey the atrocities of war to those who were far away.

One of the first important uses of photography in 1837 was that it allowed journalists to share images of the Civil War. Photographers were embedded in the front lines to document the carnage and help to communicate the terrible human cost of the war. They helped to shape the way that the pubic viewed war, since people who were nowhere near the battlefields could see how dangerous and awful it was.

As cameras got smaller and lighter and processes for developing got safer, photography continued to spread. Photojournalists in the 1930s captured the tragedy of the Great Depression, taking pictures of families and their situations, of the Dust Bowl and its destruction. This generated support for President Roosevelt and his New Deal policies. Photos had the ability to tell stories without words and share them with wide audiences. Photographs were thought to accurately mirror the world and show that it could be known and understood.

Images of families suffering during The Depression conveyed emotion.

Effects of Photography

- Challenged the authority of the written and spoken word, as photos seemed more authoritative and objective than people or the writing of people. This was despite the fact that photographs have always been manipulated, staged, reshot, and edited during processing.

- Photographs were used as identifying documents to establish one's identity, as evidence in court, and as illustrations of news and journalism.

- Photography provided a different way of recording history—a visual history. Beyond telling audiences a story, they could show the story in one singular frame. We understand images and read images in different ways than we do words, and this vocabulary needed to be developed.

This is only a selective history, and there are many other important landmarks in media development that each had profound impacts on society as they came about. But hopefully this brief narratives helps us to see common ways of understand these technological developments.

Time-Space Compression

What we are beginning to see is that one of the big changes media bring to society is the compression of time and space. Media actually change our relationship to time and space. *Space* is compressed because you can interact with someone thousands of miles away from your own home, from the comfort of your home. *Time* is compressed because you can access people, information, and ideas immediately, whether they are happening currently or happened years ago.

To see how revolutionary the compression of space and time is, we can look at the significance of transportation as a communication technology. The time for news to travel from New York City to Cincinnati, Ohio has drastically shortened over time.

- 44.5 days in 1794

- 19 days in 1817

- 7 days in 1841

What caused these changes? In 1794, information had to be transmitted using a man on horseback. Then in 1817, messages could be transmitted using a river steamboat, which was much faster. By 1841, messages could be transmitted on the railroad. All of these inventions served to quicken the pace of news. After the development of the railroads, the telegraph and the radio clearly transformed the speed of communication. But the reality is that communication channels have always relied on technologies, even when the channels were roads and rivers, rather than electric cables and airwaves.

Media as Travel

With the compression of space and time, there have been other impacts of media on our social realities.

> ❝ "When we communicate through the telephone, radio, television, or computer, where we are physically no longer determines where and who we are socially."
>
> – Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place*

Media is changing our perception of space and what space means. Instead of space meaning a physical space, it can mean something social. You can be in your living room, but take an online class and be "at school"; you can be on a bus, but be emailing your grandma all the way across the country; you can be in your college dorm, but part of a conversation with your family at home. Not only is physical movement unnecessary, but there aren't physical thresholds to mark boundaries either. No walls, doors, guards, moats. Access is a function of technology, not physicality. As technology has changed, our social situations and social identities have changed too.

Another way of thinking about how this idea that technology has changed our interaction with space is the concept

of *mobile privatization*. This is the idea that individuals are able to increase mobility even while they stay at home. The home becomes a space that is open to increasing social options—social media allows you to travel the world. When you watch tv, it's a window on the world. Alternatively, you can connect to your feeling of "being at home" from anywhere, as long as you have technology.

In some ways media creates presence, because you can be all alone and feel connected to people. They can give you social support, friendship, information, and really feel like they are right there with you. This is how media creates presence. But we can think of the flip side too, where you literally are in the presence of physical bodies, and yet everyone is absent. Media can create boundaries where people become so immersed in their media worlds that they are actually absent even when they stand in close quarters with other human beings.

So those are some of the ways that we might say technologies themselves are fundamentally changing the shape of society and how we are living in it, but we also want to think about challenges to this way of thinking. This is what we'll be doing in our next lesson.

Key Concepts
• Technological determinism
• Marshall McLuhan
• Media as mediation
• "The medium is the message"
• "Extensions of Man"
• Media's inseparability from society
• Codex Book
• Effects of Literacy
• Effects of Print
• Effects of Photography
• Religion and print
• Martin Luther
• Monopolies of Knowledge
• Time-Space compression
• Media as Travel
• Mobile Privatization
• Mediated presence/ absence

Week 3: New Media Technologies

(Go to the Online Lessons Home page to access a PDF version.)

Introduction Video | Dr. Lori Lopez | 1:17 mins

Introduction video: click to launch or to access from PDF version, copy and paste this URL into your browser: https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Week+3+-

+New+Media+Technologies/0_dhsaywnc/75945101

> ### Key Questions
>
> - What are "new media" and what theories can we use to understand what fits in this category?
> - What is the "network society," and does it mean we all have access to new media now?
> - What is the difference between interface and technology?
> - How do algorithms shape our access to information?

In this unit we've looked at debates about technological determinism, and you've seen some of the different perspectives on causality. Is it technology that causes changes in society, or is it society that causes changes in technology? Do we think that media have all the power, or people? After viewing both sides of the debate, you should now be prepared to make a more nuanced argument that demonstrates a synthesis of both perspectives.

We can see some of this middle ground here:

> " "First, the capacity to act, which media undoubtedly have, should not be confused by the capacity to determine. Second, even if media-technologies have the capacity to determine, this does not mean that they can do so unconditionally themselves, let alone on their own. In simpler terms, the fact that media are capable of acting, and perhaps even conditioning, does not mean that other forces (e.g., social, economic, cultural, political, physiological, psychological) are therefore irrelevant."
>
> – Joost Loon, *Media Technologies: Critical Perspectives*

In today's lesson that wraps up our Technology unit, we will be specifically considering the idea of "new media" and the way that theories from technology studies can further complicate and nuance our understanding of technology and agency.

What is "New Media"?

As Lisa Gitelman reminds us, "newness is a matter of perspective and a moving target" (p. 130). The media technologies that we put into the category of "new media" are constantly changing as they lose their novelty and become commonplace. It's important to recognize the fact that all media technologies were once new; our lessons on the history of technologies like the book and photography remind us of how this works. Nonetheless, we can recognize some of the common elements across the category, such as a reliance on digital computer technologies. Lev Manovich provides some other helpful categories for understanding what differentiates new media.

Lev Manovich is a theorist who has been very influential in how he talks about new media. He put forward 5 principles that define new media:

1. Numerical representation
2. Modularity

    3. Automation

    4. Variability, and

    5. Transcoding

1. Numerical Representation

First we have this idea that new media objects are composed of digital code, which is made up of numerical representations. If you are familiar with the way that binary code works, you know this means that digital code is expressed only in 1s and 0s. But another way of thinking about this is simply to distinguish between analog and digital. With an analog clock, the second hand sweeps across the face with no disruption, continuous and smooth. But with a digital clock, it can only show you the specific increments, jumping between each numerical increment.
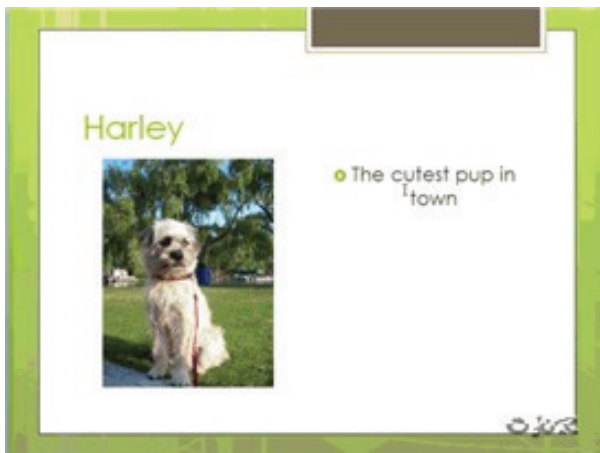
Analog clock

Digital clock

An analog object like a sculpture is still the same object when you look at it very closely. But when you zoom in to look closely at digital representations of a sculpture you will start to see discrete pixels, as is represented in this image of a sculpture by Banksy.

Image of sculpture by Banksy

2. Modularity

PowerPoint presentations combine discrete units

A new media object is a collection of discrete units that can be combined without losing their independence. They are made up of independent modules that are made up of smaller modules. When you make a new media object like a PowerPoint, you can insert an image or a video.

Each object maintains its independence even as it is inserted into the new media object. You can manipulate those objects, making them bigger or smaller, and each module still operates independently.

A webpage can also be thought of in a similar way. Every web page contains separate media elements—text, images, media clips. If you want to change the website, you can just change the individual parts without needing to redo the entire structure.

3. Automation

New media objects are created through automation that is subject to manipu-
lation. This is the idea that computer programs use algorithms that are built
into their software, rather than humans needing to make decisions about
every single thing. Since computers are involved in the coding of media
objects, human intentionality is not always as important as it is in older media
objects. We use software to do things like edit images, create layouts. Pro-
grams like Photoshop or even apps like Instagram can use automatic filters to
edit an image, with pretty minimal human intervention. Or they even auto-
matically generate an image.

If we get more high-level, new media objects can be connected to artificial
intelligence. For instance, now we have all sorts of Twitter bots that just pre-
tend to be human and steal tweets from other people. Or we have Siri on our

Siri – artificial intelligence

phones, whom we can turn to for all sorts of help, and she uses algorithms to help us to make better use of our
phones.

4. Variability

Once information has been made digital, it can be presented and organized in a multiplicity of ways. New media
objects aren't fixed forever, they usually are created to be able to be adjusted into different situations. Old media
technologies have a human creator who manually assembles text, visual elements, and audio elements into a spe-
cific sequence and then stores it. New media often come in different versions, which is sometimes related to
automation, and sometimes it just means that users can make their own decisions and chart their own path through
a single form of media.

5. Transcoding

Transcoding is the idea that when information is stored in digital form, it takes on characteristics that originate
from the computer. This means that media and culture are then being shaped by the logic of the computer.One
example of transcoding might be the rise of autotune. Think about putting an analog song into a computer, and
starting to manipulate its sound. The sound may start to become more digital as we shape it using the computer,
as we often hear in pop music today. With the rise of autotune, music itself is altered—where now, we often hear
songs on the radio with digitized voices, and singers don't even have to have good voices to become famous. This
reminds us of the way that media and digital culture have started to become inextricable. Culture is transcoded
into a digital form.

Auto-tune

Singers or digitized voices?

Networks and The Network Society

New media are also characterized by their role in creating a network society. At a basic level, networks are an interconnected system that allows flow between a set of nodes. For instance, a subway system is a network that allows passengers to move from the node of one subway stop to another.
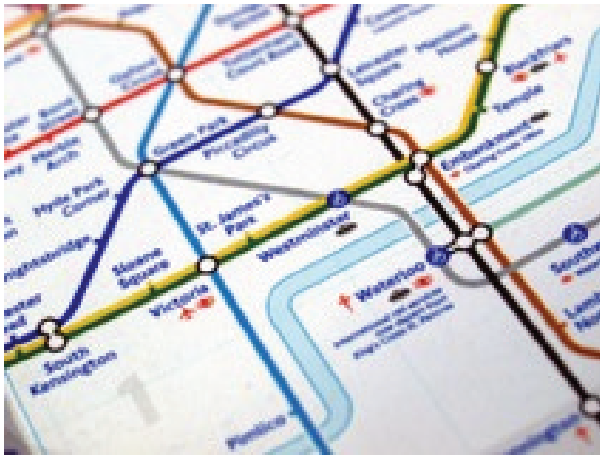
Networks allow flow between nodes

Digital networks are the systems of interconnected computers that allow individuals who connect to one another virtually and share data nearly instantaneously. Recall the lessons we learned about how media technologies transform time and space, and the way that a passenger train once led the revolution in shortening the period from sending a message to receiving it. This transformation helps us to see the significance of improving communication networks through new media technologies.

These digital networks that transfer information have become fundamentally integrated into every aspect of our society, including culture, politics, and our economy. This is what Manuel Castells calls "the network society," because information technologies are pervasive throughout our entire social structure. Digital networks can be seen at work in large systems such as banking institutions and the stock exchange, or television networks and multimedia conglomerates. They can also be seen in interpersonal networks, such as those on Facebook or our mobile phones or via email.

Networks such as these are important because they may be dynamic and able to grow infinitely large, but networks are also restricted in many ways. Not all information can flow freely in any direction, or to anyone. Certain cities may be hubs for communication and economic development because of the ways that they are central within the networked economy, while other cities struggle to participate. Certain people may be able to use their cell phones and ATM cards while they travel, but others cannot. On the one hand inequalities such as these are the result of digital networks being computerized and automated, operating on their own without needing constant human intervention. But of course we also realize that networks are shaped by and reflective of social, economic, cultural, and political relationships.

Digital networks transfer information

Digital Divides

But new media technologies are often taken up unevenly throughout society, which we recognize through what is called "the digital divide." The digital divide is the gap between those individuals and communities that have and do not have access to the information technologies like computers and the internet. This concept acknowledges that not everyone has the same opportunities to engage with communication technologies.

There are digital divide issues with regard to many different factors, including geographical location, race, income level, education level, ability or disability, and age. For instance, those who have tended to have less access to technology include people who are Black and Hispanic, lower income, less educated, older, or living in rural areas.

When talking about the digital divide, it's important to consider what assumptions we have about what it means to have access to technology. On the one hand, we might say that access is a social good, or even a right, so we should make technologies available to everyone regardless of these factors. But we also need to be careful what assumptions we make about people who don't use technology or have access. Of the one in five American adults who do not use the internet, almost half say that the main reason they don't go online is because they don't think the internet is relevant to them. So it's important to consider if it's access or desirability that precludes certain people from using technologies.

Interface

Another way of understanding the interplay between agency and control with regard to technologies is through considering interfaces. An interface connects two distinct components within a communication process. This can include the hardware, software, designs, and protocols that connect users to technology and make it accessible and useable. But they are also distinct from the technology itself, which may have significantly more capabilities than are allowed through any one interface.

Skeuomorphs are designs that mimic analog objects

For instance, a mobile phone of course relies upon wireless technologies to allow users to make phone calls. But when you look at your phone, all of your engagements are mediated through the user interface. The interface masks the digital codes that are actually working behind the scenes, and turns them into easily understandable graphics for users. Sometimes interfaces even imitate the analogue by using skeuomorphs, or photorealistic designs that mimic analog objects. Apple uses the image of a yellow legal pad to communicate that you are using note-taking software, and the image of a camera shutter closing across the screen to indicate you have snapped a photograph.

Interfaces play an important role in shaping how we engage with and understand technologies. For instance, think about the difference between the two social networking apps *Snapchat* and *Facebook*. Both can be used by individuals to connect with members of their social network through sharing images, videos, and messages. But if you think about why you prefer one app over the other, you can see some of the differences that set them apart in terms of interface. *Facebook* allows you to update

your Timeline with static posts conveying a wide range of identifying information, while *Snapchat* allows you to string together a set of videos that are shot live and disappear after 24 hours.


How are the platforms of Snapchat and Facebook different?

Depending on what functionality you are looking for, you may select one interface over another. But we should also note that when interfaces allow and disallow certain actions, these decisions are not arbitrary. In many ways they are guiding users toward certain actions and you may not think to realize or question why you are doing so.

The Social Role of Search Engines

Interfaces also shape how we find information, which is largely through using online search engines. As Alex Halavais states in Search Engine Society, "Search engines are at once the most and the least visible part of the digital, networked revolution." Halavais, p. 2. The reality is that over 80% (possibly up to 95%) of the internet is hidden from horizontal search engines, or the general purpose and commercial search engines we use on a regular basis. In the graphic below, we can see a representation of the fact that sites like Google lead us to that top layer of visible websites, but that there is an ocean of content beneath the surface.
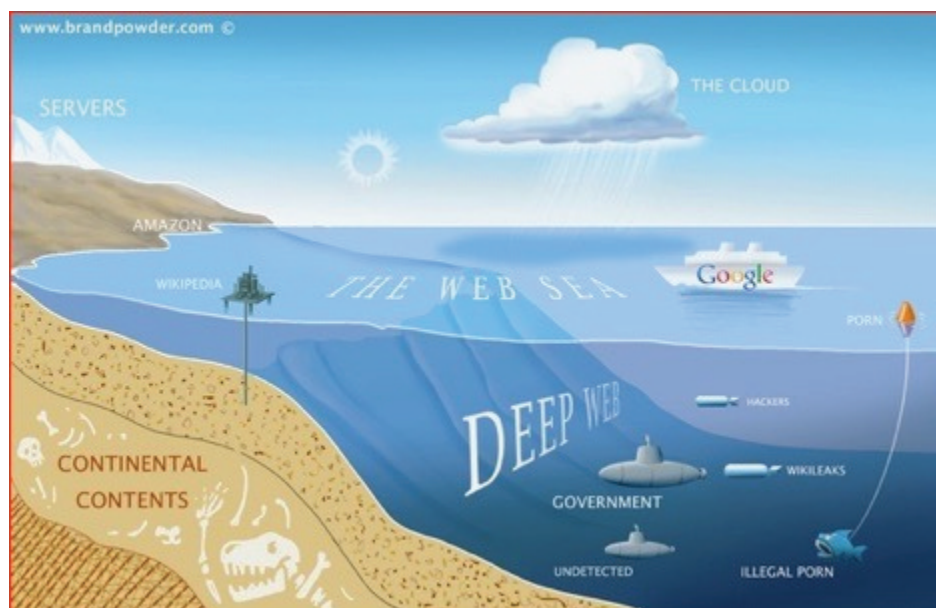
This is an artistic rendering of what is only available in "the deep web."

This includes what is known as "The Deep Web," where there are great quantities of data that are not discoverable through search engines. This includes a wide variety of content—some nefarious, such as black market sites for trafficking illegal substances, and some that seek to help people, such as whistleblowers and political dissidents avoiding government censors. Given the reality that we each have limits on our attention span and desire to comb through the thousands of options presented to us, it's important to think about how information is distributed and made available to web users. Scarcity of attention is exactly why attention has become such a valuable commodity.

> " "There is a common assumption that we have found a cure to stupid questions. Folded into that assumption we find a host of others: that even the unintelligent have access to and can use a search engine, that a search engine will lead someone to a page that contains accurate information, and that questions are best directed first to a machine, and only after that to other people."
>
> – Alex Halavais, *Search Engine Society* p. 1

Algorithms | Dr. Jeremy Morris | 5:53 mins

Algorithms video: click to launch or to access from PDF version, copy and paste this URL into your browser:

https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Algorithms/0_16fkrqen

Technological Agency

Through these descriptions of the way that search engines and other algorithms work, it should be clear that tech-

nologies take a lot of actions on their own that impact our experiences with them. But does this mean that technologies have agency? People and objects are said to possess agency when they have the ability and power to act on their own. Agents are generally assumed to have the ability to take actions and make choices of their own free will, or intentionally. On the one hand, technologies such as computers or televisions do not have the recognizably humanistic qualities of "free will," and do not undertake actions "with intention." Most often, technologies are assumed to be simply intermediaries, serving to facilitate the transfer of information and data between human agents.

> **❝** "A more useful approach…is to ignore traditional questions about the division between technology and humans, and concentrate on analyzing the cultural field in which we live as a field of forces, relations, processes, and effects."
>
> – Jennifer Daryl Slack and J. McGregor Wise, *Culture + Technology: A Primer*, p. 123

But Jennifer Daryl Slack and J. McGregor Wise argue that technology needs to be understood as acting independently, even if not with intention, with something we might call "technological agency." This perspective helps to remind us that technologies are just like any other agent in being able to take actions that cause responses in humans, do tasks that humans used to do, shape human behavior, and make connections to other humans and technologies. If we think about our cell phones, we can easily think of the changes we have made to accommodate them (perhaps organizing your bedside table so the phone is near its charger), the tasks they now are fully responsible for (such as waking you up in the morning), the way we have responded to their reliability (allowing you to travel to and navigate a totally new city), and the connected network of interactions in which our phone plays a role. Of course we need to be careful not to say that technologies are freely choosing to do any of these things, but this idea of technological agency does help us to see how technologies should be recognized for the integral role they play in our society—regardless of whether or not it's technology or people that ultimately have the most power over our lives.

Key Concepts

- New Media
- Lev Manovich's 5 Principles of New Media

  ◦ Numerical representation

  ◦ Modularity

  ◦ Automation

  ◦ Variability

  ◦ Transcoding

- Networks and The Network Society

- Digital Divide
- Interface
- Search engines
- The Deep Web
- Algorithms
- Technological Agency

Week 4: Commercial Models and Biases

(Go to the Online Lessons Home page to access a PDF version.)

Introduction Video | Dr. Lori Lopez | 1:19 mins

Introduction video: click to launch or to access from PDF version, copy and paste this URL into your browser:

https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Week+4+-+Commercial+Models+%26+Biases/0_kjm9zd6r

———————————————

Profit Motive

In its most basic sense, media is a commercial product. Every mainstream media product, from newspapers to musical recordings to movies to video games needs to make money in order to survive. So the market or profit motive is obviously one central motivation in shaping content.

"We have no obligation to make history.
We have no obligation to make art.
We have no obligation to make
a statement.
To make money is our only objective."

-Michael Eisner
Former CEO, The Walt Disney Co.
(Internal Memo)

Michael Eisner, the former CEO of Disney, explaining his primary objective.

If we think about the financial structure of media, there are three main ways for media as businesses to survive:

- Direct audience payment

- Payment between media companies, and

- Advertising revenue.

Direct Audience Payments

This is when the audience pays for the media, and that money goes directly to the company. A lot of print media rely upon this kind of payment, with magazines and newspapers selling both subscriptions so they can regularly guarantee that people will buy their product, but also just selling individual copies on newsstands. This is also the case for items like books, CDs, movie tickets, and video games. With regard to television, we can add premium cable channels into this list.

Payment Between Media Companies

Another way that media companies make money is through the licensing of their product to other companies. Media distributors pay content developers for the right to screen or reproduce their content. For instance, movie theaters pay movie producers for the right to show the film, or television channels pay for the right to screen tv shows, particularly in syndication.

Media and Advertisers | Dr. Lori Lopez | 5:34

Media & Advertisers video: click to launch or to access from PDF version, copy and paste this URL into your browser:

https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Media+and+Advertisers/0_u1drdftm/75945101

Consequences for Media Content

When advertisers are the ones wielding so much financial power, contributing so much money to media producers, they also impact the kinds of stories that are told. Media producers want to maintain good relationships with advertisers, so they will be careful to shape their content in a way that won't upset corporations.

One of the predominant themes within reality television is a focus on high-end consumption.

As a result, what do we see more of?

One of the predominant themes is a focus on consumption. We can see this theme emerging in the following ways:

- The central role of expensive fashion, gourmet food, design, grooming, and beauty. Advertisers love shows that feature high-end taste and high-end consumption.

- Reality shows like *Top Chef* or *Project Runway* flatter viewers because they are in a position to judge the taste of professionals.

- *Bravo* in particular chases after a demographic of upscale, well-educated trendsetters that they call "Affluencers." So we get all these stories about extreme luxury consumption.

- The MTV show *My Super Sweet 16* is a form of consumer porn, with scene after scene of teenaged girls costing their parents thousands of dollars in extravagance and luxury items. Their parties are portrayed as laughable, but also can be seen as aspirational. As viewers we know we won't ever live a life like them, but we can aspire to it nonetheless and occasionally buy items similar to those featured on the show.

Together these texts reestablish our cultural values around wealth and consumption and fashion. This kind of content teaches us that "the good life" is something that can be bought and sold. If only you can buy the right products, then you'll be happy, popular, accomplished, fulfilled.

The show "Roseanne" was groundbreaking because it showed a working-class family that often talked about economic struggles.

What do we see less of?

One example of a lifestyle that is less visible in mainstream media is working-class life. The show *Roseanne* was groundbreaking because it showed a working-class family that often talked about economic struggle and talks with disdain about middle class cultural forms. Viewers are much more familiar with families like the Banks family on *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air,* where the dad is a judge and the family has a butler. Or the group of friends

on *Friends* who wouldn't actually be able to afford their nice apartment if they really worked as a barista or an unemployed actor.

There are so few depictions of workers and working-class life, it seems pretty impossible to forge a working-class identity. In many ways, the media denies working-class existence.

The Rural Purge, 1969-1972

In the early 1970s networks decided they would rather attract a young urban demographic, so they cancelled rural-themed shows like "The Andy Griffith Show."

We can also see this shift in values exemplified in what is known as "The Rural Purge." This purge was a series of cancellations of rural-themed shows in the early 1970s when networks decided they would rather attract a young urban demographic. Shows like *The Beverly Hillbillies, Green Acres, Mister Ed, The Andy Griffith Show,* and other shows about the American heartland and rural life were cancelled.

> ❝ One of the actors from Green Acres stated, "It was the year CBS cancelled everything with a tree."

The reasoning behind the purge was that the networks decided they wanted to put more attention toward attracting a younger demographic, and executives were worried about remaining relevant.   It was assumed that rural audi-

ences weren't interested in spending money on things like fashion and fancy products. This would make them bad consumers and thus a bad audience.

They replaced these shows that took place in the countryside with shows that took place in urban centers. They were also looking for shows with more social relevance, like *All in the Family*, with its focus on how a family deals with racism, homosexuality, women's issues, the Vietnam war, and other controversial issues.

Self-Censorship and Chilling Effects

Some of the effects of such values are fairly explicit, like the stated intentions of *Bravo* to go after people who make more than $100,000 a year by having shows about rich people who become more happy by buying things. But the effects that we might not notice are when media censor themselves by simply not developing programs on topics that they think advertisers won't support.

Reflection
Can you think of a topic that we might not see talked about in the media, because we're afraid advertisers won't like it? • For example, discussions about global warming are often something that big companies don't want to see. • What other issues can you think of that are not portrayed in the media?

One example of a perspective that we almost never see talked about seriously in the media is critiques of capitalism or alternatives to capitalism, such as socialism. The relationship between advertisers and media is so deeply embedded within capitalism that we never really get an opportunity to hear about or consider any alternatives. We can also look at the issue of stifling certain messages because of the influence of advertisers.

Example: Criticizing Tobacco

"Physicians say "LUCKIES are less irritating"

Tobacco companies have been major advertisers since the 1950s, which is coincidentally when we started to learn that tobacco was extremely unhealthy and lead to higher mortality rates. This reality about the harmful effects of tobacco had already been proven in 1954, but this information was often not reported on. Magazines that carried tobacco advertisements were far less likely to report news on the hazards of smoking. If they did report a story, tobacco companies would pull their advertising dollars and the publication would suffer financially.

We can think about this relationship today with big pharmaceuticals and issues like global warming. But we can also think about how this happens still today, and particularly due to the shrinking ownership of media companies. With so few voices controlling what we see, there is even more opportunity to silence alternative perspectives.

Shifts in Format

We can also think about choices with regard to what kinds of shows to produce as being about financial necessity. In the last few decades, television audiences have been declining and the cost of producing quality programming is increasing. We'll talk more about these shifts in viewing practices on Thursday, but for today we can still think about how the business of television contributes to different programming choices.

So for example in the 1990s we saw the proliferation of news magazine programs like *Dateline*, *20/20*, and *60 Minutes*. These kind of newsmagazine shows shared resources with their news programs, so some content could be repackaged and reused in these longer programs. And in general they were cheap to produce.

In the 2000s of course we saw the rise of unscripted programs. This includes game shows (*Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, *Deal or No Deal*), talent competitions (*American Idol*, *Dancing with the Stars*, *The Voice*), and reality programming (*Survivor*).

Conclusion

These are some of the different forces that we can consider when taking a deeper look behind the scenes at what forces contribute to what it is that we see in the media. We can think about business interests and where the money is coming from. We can think about all of the different structural forces such as who is the franchisor, who is the franchisee, who is the licensor and the licensee, who has creative control. Within the question of who has creative control, we can continue to look at what kinds of negotiations are taking place and whose stories are being privileged or left out altogether.

Key Concepts
• Profit motive
• Ears and eyeballs for sale
• Product placement
• Hypercommercialization
• Affluencers
• Focus on consumption
• Working class life in the media
• Rural purge
• Self-censorship
• Tobacco effects
• Franchising as business practice
• Media franchising
• Myths of authorship
• Production cultures

Week 5: Market Fragmentation and Narrowcasting

Introduction Video | Dr. Lori Lopez | 1:05 mins

https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Week+5+-+Market+Fragmentation+%26+Narrowcasting/0_4an1goyu

Key Questions
• What is market fragmentation?

- What factors lead to it?
- How does it impact how we study the media?

Mass Audience

LIFE magazine and USA TODAY – mass media for everyone, about everyone

When we think about publications like *LIFE* or *USA TODAY,* there isn't much specificity to who it's trying to target—it's for everyone, about everyone. The reality is that these goals might be unachievable, but we can nevertheless recognize the ethos of these publications. They seek to reach out to everyone and please everyone.

The Big 3 Networks dominated the market from the early years of television until the 1970s.

The same is true for television, with the Big 3 Networks. ABC, CBS, and NBC dominated the market from the early years of television until the 1970s. Advertisers could buy out their prime-time spots and be confident that millions of viewers would see their ads. For instance, at its peak in 1952, *I Love Lucy* reached 67 million viewers. Up to 71% of all television households would tune in to view the program.

In the late 1970s, 90% of people watching prime-time TV were watching one of the big 3 networks, so advertisers really only needed to focus on those channels and their programs.

Connecting to Horkheimer and Adorno

Horkheimer and Adorno describe a world filled with sameness and standardization, where there is no need for innovation because novelty or creativity could actually jeopardize dominance. They complain that media producers are only interested in churning out the same products so that audiences would continue to maintain interest and loyalty. They didn't want to challenge their audiences or try to reach out to specific audiences, they just wanted to please the masses. At this time, we were seeing lots of very traditional, family-friendly fare like *The Brady Bunch* and *Gilligan's Island*.

Least Objectionable Programming

Within this idea of mass audiences, we start to see a practice known as "least objectionable programming." We can think about audiences settling in to just "watch television" without knowing in advance what they want to watch, just turning on the set and watching whatever happens to be on. If they aren't offended or annoyed by what they see, they'll stay there; if they hate it or it offends them, they'll change the channel. The theory of least objectionable programming is that you just have to make programs that won't cause people to change the channel, and you've got yourself an audience.

Market Fragmentation

Marketing to parents

These understandings of how to be a successful television programmer began to change in the 1980s and 1990s. When we talk about how advertisers support media industries by buying advertisements, there are a number of different strategies that can undergird this system. Originally, advertisers were interested in the mass audience—the big undifferentiated whole, where they went broad with their message and targeted the general market. But advertisers soon realized that there was a way to segment the audience into market categories and actually play to their specific differences—or targeted marketing.

Targeted marketing wasn't invented in the 1970s; we have long had ads such as these that were targeted to women, or to the parents of children. But in the 1970s there started to be a real emphasis in dividing the mass audience into specific market categories and thinking about their specific needs and desires. Content was produced with only certain people in mind, instead of having "everyone" in mind.

Marketing to women

Fordism

We can think about this different orientation within advertising as being related to shifts in larger systems of production in the U.S. From the 1940s to the 1960s we characterize the U.S. as being shaped by Fordism. Fordism is named after Henry Ford, the founder of the Ford Motor Company. Fordism is an economic system that is based on industrialized and standardized modes of production.

Henry Ford created the idea of an assembly line

The reason Ford Motors was so successful was because its factories were extremely efficient in producing the exact same car over and over again. He created the idea of the assembly line where the whole system was standardized. You just have to make sure the system runs smoothly, that each part goes where it belongs. They were able to produce mass quantities of the Model T, which brought down the prices and increased profitability.

> " "You can have any color as long as it's black."
> – Henry Ford

Henry Ford's central idea was that you should produce one thing really efficiently, and then convince everyone that they want it.

If we move beyond the world of cars and into the world of media, we can think about how in the 1950s there was a fairly uniform sense of audience—the nuclear family who all watched the same thing.

Producers made one show, like *I Love Lucy*, and millions of people would sit down to watch it together, and all these different kinds of people would find it appealing (or at least they wouldn't feel compelled to change the channel).

Post-Fordism

So we can see the strengths of Fordism and its assembly line mode of production. But in the early 1970s a new way of thinking started to prevail—one that was based on flexibility and customization. We call this kind of thinking Post-Fordism. As technology became more advanced, factories didn't need to rely on the exact same processes. Computers could be used to add different options and produce products that felt like they were made

just for you. There seemed to be limitless options for consumers—products would come in all sorts of variations in color, size, materials.

Snooki's customized taste: all leopard.

Snooki of *Jersey Shore* fame provides a good example of Post-Fordism—everything in her life is customized for her uniquely garish taste. Her car is black with pink trim, and her house and body are coated completely in animal prints. She is able to design a unique look for herself and her surroundings through the ability to customize.

If we look at how this shift is echoed in peo-ple's lives, we can think about different factions of society splitting off in the 60s. We had hippies and the birth of a counterculture. We had the civil rights movement and black power and the feminist movement. In the 70s and 80s, family structures changed. There was more divorce, less focus on marriage and the nuclear family, more vari-eties in family types. Instead of wanting to be like every-one else, people wanted to split into factions of people like themselves. So with post-Fordism and these shifts in American society, television networks begin to produce shows that reflect these changes.

Even Snooki's car is customized just for her.

Market Research

This interest in the specificities of their audiences coincided with a rise in market research as well. Advertisers needed to know things about their audience in order to tailor their message to them. Let's look at some of the tools that are used for market research.

AC Nielsen

In the U.S., the Nielsen Company essentially has a monopoly on television ratings. They started in 1923 when Arthur C. Nielsen's company began conducting consumer research for big companies. In 1942, they started focusing on media audience measurement by collecting information on how radios were being tuned. The data for this was called the Nielsen Radio Index.

The Nielsen Company has a monopoly on measuring TV ratings.

In 1950, they started collecting data on television viewership. Today they still undertake all sorts of consumer research on things like who buys dog food and what kind of people shop at Walmart, but mostly their name has become synonymous with television ratings and audience measurement.

But how do we measure what media people consume? There are basically two schools of thought on this. The first is diaries: you pick a statistically random group of families to monitor, and then ask them to write down everything they watch. This method is of course fairly slow and also potentially inaccurate, since it relies on memory and selective reporting. Viewers always have to remember to jot down what they watched, and maybe they forget, or maybe they fudge it a little.

To combat these problems, Nielsen began moving to a system called "people meters" that would be installed directly into the television sets of Nielsen families in their largest markets. Each person in the family was assigned a number, and then they would enter in who was watching. Of course the problem with this is that it records when the TV is on, not when people are watching. So if someone turns the TV on and then leaves the room, or falls asleep, or goes to work, it will record everything as if they really tuned in and made the decision to watch all those shows. It's also not recording who is actually tuning in. So we can see there are some difficulties with capturing data about what people are viewing, but Nielsen is still working on how to improve that information.

Arbitron measures radio listening through different measurements and devices.

Arbitron

There is also a company called Arbitron that measures who is listening to the radio in the same way—they either have families record what they listen to in diaries, or they install electronic devices into the radio. A third option is the Portable People Meter, which was invented in 2007. This is a device that people wear like a pager and it automatically records what a person is listening to in the world, and then can identify the source of that broadcast. So one person will wear a meter for a while and then they can tell what broadcasts that person is in the vicinity of.

Demographics and Psychographics

Once this kind of data on what media you consume is collected, it can be linked to all sorts of other data. Demographics are the quantifiable statistics about a population. They include are those basic identifying descriptors like age, gender, geographic location, race, socioeconomic class, if you're married, and level of education of your consumers. They provide a primary source of information.

This kind of data is fairly easy to collect about people; in our surveillance society where there's data about us floating around everywhere through things like your purchases or your internet browsing history. Because of this, corporations can now access information about an even wider range of personal factors—things like your job history, the magazines you subscribe to, your sexual orientation, where you went to college, your favorite brand of coffee, your charitable giving history, your political leanings.

- Female
- 25-34 years old
- Household Income $70,000+
- Urban center

- Mother of 2 children
- Plays video games
- Individualistic, self-motivated
- Pro-environment

Psychographics go beyond demographics to also include personality, values, and attitudes.

Psychographics go beyond demographics to also include personality, values, and attitudes. Within a certain demographic group, people will still have different perceptions about your product. Psychographics get at how you feel about a product, what kinds of decisions you make, what emotions impact your consumer habits. Because corporations don't just want to know who you are, but what you are like, and whether or not you'll want to buy their product.

Example: Target and Its Customers

Target is a company that individually identifies its consumers by a unique ID code so it knows everything customers have ever bought. Then it sends them coupons, encouraging them to buy more of those things. In 2012, they were in the news because they started tracking when they thought women were pregnant so they could get them hooked on Target as the source of baby diapers and food and everything. They went deep into their statistics and discovered they could tell when a woman was in her second trimester because she started buying things like unscented lotion, vitamins, big bags of cotton balls.

Target individually identifies its consumers so it knows everything customers have ever bought

This data was so accurate that one father got upset at Target because they started sending coupons to his high

school daughter for maternity clothes and baby cribs. The manager called to apologize, but by then the dad had had a heart-to-heart with his daughter and found out she was due in a few months!

Technological Competition & Regulation

Another change in the media landscape that lead to market fragmentation was the growth and development of cable television. The number of channels the average American receives in their TV has gradually been increasing as cable proliferates.

Average Number of TV Channels

Year	Number of Channels
1950	2-3
1970	5-6
1980	10
1990	33
2000	63
2010	135

The average American has access to more channels as cable proliferates

Cable channels don't go after large audiences, they target specific audiences by offering specific programming that appeal to them. Instead of just measuring how many households they reached, they wanted to be able to reach specific targeted demographics. This can be seen in the way that cable structures its content, where you are now able to choose a specific channel to fulfill your desires for specific content. There are channels for just sports, just movies, just news, just weather, just home shopping.

But the channels themselves also target more specific demographics.

- We already talked about how Bravo is going after "the affluencers"—upper class, white, trend-setting, well educated taste makers.
- MTV is focused on affluent youth, from their teens to their 20s
- Nickelodeon is going after preschoolers, children, pre-teens, and teenagers
- Nick at Nite targets their parents with nostalgic programming.

Cable channels target specific audiences

Since cable television largely developed after deregulation, we already know that regulatory bodies were more interested in opening up possibilities for media growth than in censoring content at that time. But cable television was also not considered part of the broadcast stations or part of the public interest, so the FCC hasn't regulated its content as strictly. This is why you can see more adult content on cable channels than on the networks. You can see some pretty edgy comedy on Comedy Central that might be complained about or protested if it were on network TV.

The FCC hasn't regulated cable channels as strictly as network TV

But we can also go one step further with premium cable channels like HBO and Showtime that charge a monthly subscription fee. Because of this financial structure, they don't need to rely on advertisements to interrupt their programming. They can have complete artistic control over their programming, and often demonstrate this freedom by having graphic sexual and violent content. It's more like an R-rated movie.

We can see the impact of all these new choices on viewership numbers through the decades. The idea of a mass audience is no longer as relevant as it once was.
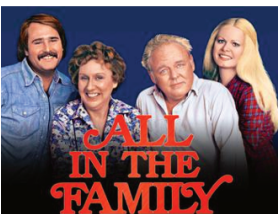
Top-Rated Shows by Decade

 67.3

 34.9

 39.1

 25.0

 34.0

 25.3

Viewership numbers through the decades

Other technologies besides cable have also impacted the development of narrowcasting. One is the development of VCRs, so viewers could record and replay programs, and also rent movies and watch them in their own homes. This was the first way that people could skip past commercials. But also a way for people to watch "shows" instead of just "television," or the flow of shows one after another.

Videocassettes

Remote controls –> channel surfing

Another important technology was the remote control. Before remote controls, people had to get up and manipulate their television sets in order to switch channels. This obviously made it less likely they would change channels at all. The first remote control was invented in the 1950s and it was connected to the TV with a wire. It wasn't until the 1970s that infrared remote controls became popular and people regularly started sitting back in order to change the channel. But once they could easily change the channel, we start to see the idea of "channel surfing," or obviously making a lot more choices about what they want to watch, instead of just watching what was on.

Video games allow people to interact with entertainment

Satellite TV and radio offer even more choices

Other technological advances in the 1980s included video games, where people could interact with their entertainment instead of having it fed to them from a static source. Satellite technology made it possible to have satellite television and radio, which obviously offered a whole new world of stations and channels and content for consumers to choose from. With all this specificity and interactivity, it made sense for content producers to then target niche audiences instead of mass audiences. People were making choices about what they wanted.

Market Franchising | Dr. Derek Johnson | 6.12 mins

https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Media+Franchising/0_ulvhvcrz

Narrowcasting and Studying the Media

Together these forces helped lead to narrowcasting, or a more customized version of broadcasting that targets information to a specific, narrowly defined group of recipients—or, at the extreme, to a specific individual—at a particular time and place.

So what have been the results of this move toward narrowcasting and niche cultures? How does it change the way we study the media? Here are some of the implications we can think about:

Programming possibilities—Now networks can be less worried about ostracizing certain viewers. Instead of thinking about the least objectionable content, they can think about using extreme content to speak to a certain demographic. Shows like *The Daily Show* or *Fox News*, or even the really risqué programming on *Adult Swim* can only cater to one specific audience, but in our new era of narrowcasting this is a successful model.

Brand loyalty and fandom—Instead of reaching everyone, they want to reach a target audience who is loyal. That loyal audience is actually a better audience for advertisements than high numbers.

Viewing Habits—We start hearing the phrase "appointment TV," where instead of just turning the TV on and flipping through the channels, people tune in for specific programs. With DVRs we sometimes bypass the idea that we need to tune in at a certain time. This does still happen for some shows; for instance, if you don't watch *American Idol* or *So You Think You Can Dance* live, you can't participate in voting. Or there are shows where the stars of the shows will be live-tweeting, which entices viewers to tune in while the show is live and simultaneously enter the Twitter livestream as they watch.

The Long Tail

Another phenomenon that we can take note of is the long tail. Chris Anderson developed the theory of the long tail that reminds us that there are a small number of products that are extremely popular and in high demand. And then there is the long tail of all of the other products that exist, but only a small number of people want them.

Chris Anderson's theory of the long tail; there are a small number of products that are extremely popular/ in high demand. And then a long tail of other products with smaller demand.

In the red head of the tail you would find *The New York Times* bestselling books, top 40 songs, blockbuster movies. Those are the books you see in Barnes and Noble, the songs you can buy on CDs, the movies you see in theaters.

In the orange long tail you find the obscure titles you can mostly only buy online.

But what this theory reminds us is that the tail is long, and that within that length there are millions of consumers and millions of dollars in their spending money. There is actually a larger share of the population under the long tail than these few popular items. When you have online retailers with the capacity to offer endless numbers of books on Amazon, movies on Netflix, or songs on iTunes, you start to see that the long tail is where you make your money. All of these online retailers are taking advantage of the limitless space they have to carry obscure titles and allow consumers to discover connections among this expanding database.

Egocasting

We now exercise a lot of control over our media. We command our television to record our favorite programs. We surf the internet and avoid the ideas and images we disagree with. We create that echo chamber of ideas where everything just confirms the same message instead of challenging ourselves to confront opposing ideas. We can selectively avoid things we dislike.

As a result, our media becomes very personal, specifically crafted just for us—both because we have the tools to select media, and because media catered to our specific niche exists and was promoted to us. Egocasting is the idea that the media is extremely personalized and narrow, tailored just for us. You can single-mindedly focus exclusively on media that reflects you and your taste.

Something for everyone?

So with all this niche marketing and focusing on specific segments of the population, does that mean that there's something for everyone? Does this remedy the problem of underrepresentation and make it so everyone can see themselves reflected in the media? In many ways we do get a much more interesting cross-section of society now that everything isn't focused on the same demographic.

But we still need to remember the focus on consumption and consumer markets. If a group isn't considered a

strong consumer market, they still might be left out. We still don't see a lot of stories told about rural communities, about poor people, about many minorities or other groups who are otherwise seen as less desirable consumer markets.

Although we see that identities are being turned into consumer groups all the time, like kids as consumers, or gays and lesbians as consumers, or Latinos as consumers, there are still plenty of groups who have yet to be recognized as a target market.

Key Concepts

- Mass audience
- The Big Three
- Least objectionable programming
- Market fragmentation
- Fordism
- Post-Fordism
- Market research
- Nielsen
- Arbitron
- Psychographics
- Cable channels
- Regulating cable
- VCRs
- Remote controls
- Brand loyalty
- Appointment TV
- The long tail
- Something for everyone

Week 6: Texts and Genres

(Go to the Online Lessons Home page to access a PDF version.)

Introduction Video | Dr. Jonathan Gray | 1:42 mins

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https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Week+6A+Texts+%26+Genres/1_495gk22j

- What is "the text" and how do we make sense of it?

- How can we analyze mise-en-scène and other components of a text?

- How can we analyze genre?

The goal for this lesson is to start developing your ability to interpret meaning in media texts. When we use the term "text" in media studies of course we don't just mean written text—texts can refer to movies, television programs, songs, music videos, any media object that we analyze in the same manner as a written text.

Approaching Texts

One approach to thinking about texts ranging from novels to films to paintings as an aesthetic object, a work of art. A traditional way of viewing and understanding texts is to see them as holy objects of sheer beauty, and as critics our job is to decode their beauty. Art becomes a beautiful, aesthetic object that produces an emotional response, a way of encountering the sublime. Matthew Arnold was a major thinker who pushed the first view, positioning literature and art within the realm of aesthetics. He believed that there existed an elite form of "Culture" that was focused on the achievement of perfection and order. His definition of "Culture" only included "the best that had been thought and said," and excluded things that were considered lesser or inferior.
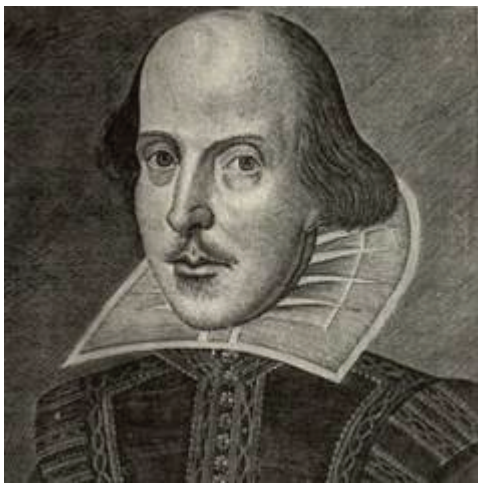
Students are often taught Shakespeare because he is seen as a "great author."

This kind of textual analysis is commonly seen in literature studies and other humanities disciplines, and many students are already familiar with this method from other courses. Many people first encounter Shakespeare with the idea that we should read his works because he is a great writer, and it's important to be able to demonstrate mastery of his ideas and oeuvre. This is why we have the idea of "the classics," or the belief that everyone has a responsibility to familiarize themselves with great works such as Charles Dickens, the film Casablanca, symphonies by Beethoven, artists like Da Vinci and Van Gogh.

This way of thinking clearly establishes a hierarchy between the so-called great movies and B-movies, between great music and popular music, between quality television and trashy television. It reminds us that cultural texts that are available to everyone or popular with the masses are often seen as lower quality. This hierarchy is something that we will learn to fully deconstruct later in this unit.

But as we look at texts of all kinds, we can still apply these skills in interpreting and making sense of aesthetic constructions. We can ask why media producers made certain aesthetic decisions, and what impact those deci-

sions have. Let's think about how media images are composed and how their choices advance a certain under-standing of the text.

Mise-En-Scène

Mise-en-scène is a term that comes from theatre and is used to describe the way that things are visually staged. It offers us a way of assessing different visual elements of a film, television program, music video, video game, or other form of media. We want to consider the way that different elements of a scene or a shot are composed deliberately, and with purpose.

Mise-en-scène refers to the idea that everything on a stage was placed there deliberately.

Techniques for Analyzing Media Texts

Today's lesson is designed to help us think about many of these of these staged components, as well as other deci-sions made by media creators that shape the meaning of a text. Some of the key concepts we will be exploring are:

- Setting
- Composition
- Staging
- Cinematography
- Film stock
- Costume

- Makeup and hair

- Acting style

- Lighting

We will be thinking about how these different elements can inform our interpretation of a text. We will ask questions such as, what is our eye drawn to? What is visually emphasized in this scene? What are we supposed to look at, and what is less important? In the following examples we will highlight one aspect at a time, but there are always multiple and competing aspects that build on one another to together shape interpretations of meaning.

Setting

Some questions we might want to ask about the setting of a shot include the following:

- Where does the action take place?

- What's the scenery, or the architecture, or the general space that is depicted?

- Where was it shot, and what does that tell us about the story?

- What's emphasized about the setting and what's de-emphasized?

300 | First Battle Scene | 4:58 mins

https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/300+-+First+Battle+Scene+-+Full+HD+1080p+-+Earthquake.+No+Captain%2C+Battle+Formations….mp4/0_ifw7niwb

In this scene from *300,* we can ask these questions about the setting. We can see that it was likely filmed on a sound stage with the actors in front of a green screen, rather than taking the actors to a physical location somewhere. Since this film is a fantasy, it doesn't need to feel grounded in a real location. One impact of this choice of setting is that it helps to convey a sense of the world as belonging within the realm of fantasy and mythology. It's an epic tale of grand proportions, not a realistic vision of any world that we currently might see somewhere.

Part of the meaning with regard to setting can relate to whether or not the scene was shot "on location" or in a studio. We hear so much about when "the city becomes a character itself" because people are trying to convey a real and recognizable urban landscape.

'The Hangover' (2009) was clearly filmed on location in Las Vegas.

An example where the setting really matters might be a movie like *The Hangover,* which was obviously shot in Las Vegas. The film is filled with easily recognizable buildings, casinos, landmarks, and skylines that could not easily be faked.

This contrasts with *300,* where the entire look of the film imitates a comic book, with the sharp lines and outlines. Its visual style is largely referencing the Frank Miller comic series it is based on. Realism is important in some ways, but the dramatic use of special effects lends a striking visuality that does not depend upon a strong connection to location.

The movie '300' is based on a Frank Miller comic book.

Composition / Staging

When we look at what's in the frame, we want to think about how the space is being used and taken up. What's the most important thing in the shot? Is it balanced or uneven?

This scene from 'Game of Thrones' shows the scale of The Wall in comparison to the characters.

Here's a shot from the television show *Game of Thrones*, which depicts a location known as The Wall. On the very bottom of the screen, you can make out the shape of some men on horses emerging from the gate heading toward the trees. We can think about what we learn from the way that this shot is composed. There is a clear emphasis on the gigantic snow-covered wall rather than the people here. This composition can help to convey the message that we have entered into a harsh landscape where the people are powerless against the forces of nature. They built the wall to be strong and massive, serving to protect their people from the threatening incursion of the cold winter and other enemies.

This scene from 'The Searchers' shows the vastness of the land in comparison to the cowboys.

We can see the same tactic being used in Westerns, such as in this scene from *The Searchers (1956)*. This classic Western starring John Wayne was shot mostly in the plains of Texas and Utah. Like many Westerns, there is an ample use of wide angle shots so that viewers can appreciate the landscape of the frontier and the West, and contemplate man's role in relation to the vastness of the land.

Cinematography

The art of cinematography includes a wide range of decisions made by the Director of Photography, including what film stock to use, how to compose the shot, and how to move the camera. But to focus our examination here, we can begin by examining the use of color.

'Schindler's List' is entirely in black and white, except for the pointed use of red color in some scenes.

The movie *Schindler's List* (1993) is shot entirely in black and white, but with occasional pops of red color. If we think about what the black and white film stock conveys, we might include the sense that it is telling a historical story that evokes the black and white photographs from that time period. But the use of black and white also doesn't beautify the events in any way; clearly the film is calling attention to horrible atrocities, and the use of black and white can help viewers to distance themselves from the pain of what is being visualized. As with animated stories, different visual techniques can be used to dull the realism of a story to evoke different emotions and potentially make it easier to deal with horror or taboo subjects.

We can also analyze the meaning of the little girl's red coat, which stands out amidst the otherwise black and white story. Her character, highlighted by the red coloring, becomes the visual symbol of the atrocities. The blood red color of her coat calls attention to the character of Schindler, who must confront his role in upholding violence and rethink his actions.

Moonrise Kingdom | Trailer | 2.32 mins.

The color palette used in the film *Moonrise Kingdom* helps to create a nostalgic feeling.

Now we are in a position to combine some of these elements. In this trailer for Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom,* what do you notice about color, or composition, or setting?

In terms of color, the mustard-hued film stock looks like the kinds of home videos from the 1960s that someone might find in their garage. This coloring helps to place the film in this time period and give it a vintage feeling. The composition of many of the shots relies on symmetry, which has a simplicity that is very childlike. With the shots of summer camp and its rural New England location, we get the feeling that when these kids run away from home they will still be safe. Together, the film evokes a nostalgic feeling that reminds us of the comfort of a Rockwell painting and other classic Americana.

Oz the Great and Powerful | Trailer | 2.44 mins.

https://youtu.be/DylgNj4YQVc

This 2013 film builds from the original world depicted in *The Wizard of Oz*. These kinds of updated versions or remakes can help to more clearly highlight the choices that have been made, since we can compare them to the original. Like the original film, *Oz the Great and Powerful* makes the same transition from black and white to color as a way of marking the emotional journey of the main character. The color palette used in Kansas contrasts with the land of Oz, which highlights the emotional journey from one to the other and the difference between the two worlds.

We can also see that the screen literally gets bigger when we travel to Oz, as Oscar's world opens up like curtains parting to reveal a bigger and more fantastical world. The use of makeup and costuming also can be examined for what they are conveying, such as that the good witch is white and bright and the bad witch is dark and moody.

Costume and Makeup

When we look at costume and makeup choices, these are some questions we can ask:

- What are the actors wearing?

- How does it reflect who they are as a character?

- Is it naturalistic?

- Is it overdone?

- Does it allow for the expression in their face?

What do we learn about the characters in 'The Walking Dead' based on how they are costumed?

The AMC television show *The Walking Dead* effectively conveys a sense of character through outfit choices. In a post-apocalyptic world where zombies have taken over the streets and human society is struggling for a foothold, the characters often have very limited choices of what to wear. When we look at them, we get this sense that their clothes need to be durable and allow for easy movement. No one has time to wash their clothes or adorn themselves with decorative flourishes. Together, the color palette of olive, drab, and sweat-drenched brown conveys the sense that they have become a military unit focused on survival at all costs. Their visual cohesion reflects the way that they have come together and have learned how to work as a team.

These two different versions of *Alice in Wonderland* provide a case study for analyzing differences.

Walt Disney's 'Alice in Wonderland' (1951)

Tim Burton's 'Alice in Wonderland' (Walt Disney Productions 2010)

Alice in Wonderland again offers the chance to compare the original to the remake, which here is a live-action version from 2010. In the newer version, we can see a much spookier feel that is conveyed through the makeup and costume choices. The emphasis is on the quirky characters, rather than Alice, which also serves to re-center the story on the adults rather than the child.

Genre & Genre Analysis

Genres offer a set of conventions and codes so that the style of the text is easily recognizable

Another element that we can additionally consider is genre. Genres offer a set of conventions and codes so that the style of the text is easily recognizable. When you know what genre you're watching, you already know a lot about what kinds of plots you'll see, what kinds of settings will be used, what kinds of characters you'll encounter. Each of these different elements can help you to understand what's important, but can also help key you in to departures from the standard form, and what makes this text different or unique. The visual style of certain genres also plays a role in shaping meaning. Let's look at a few different classic genres and the way that their visuality contributes to what is being conveyed.

Genre: Film Noir

In this intro sequence for the Netflix show *Jessica Jones*, we can see the genre of film noir being evoked. This genre often plays with lighting, using light and darkness to convey a mood and the plot. As the name suggests, noir is a dark genre with a dark tone. The visual quality of the cinematography often matches this tone, with a heavy use of black and white.

Jessica Jones works in the dark to solve mysteries in the streets of Hell's Kitchen.

Noir stories often focus on detectives trying to solve a mystery, so the darkness mirrors the confusion of trying to figure out the truth. The characters include noir staples such as the femme fatale, who is dangerous and alluring. The stories often play out in urban locations, where the streets are dark and filled with tunnels and hidden alleyways that mirror the mystery surrounding criminal activities. We can see this in *Jessica Jones*, our private investigator superhero, who wears all black while she spies and solves crimes in the streets of Hell's Kitchen.

Genre: Horror

Other genres use visual conventions to shape emotional responses, interpretations, and expectations. When we understand the genre, we know how to respond to a certain text, even when they use some of the same general mise-en-scène.

The film 'Blair Witch Project' used unusual close-up shots to reveal and provoke fear.

For instance, within the horror genre, a close-up can be used to strike terror into our hearts. In this iconic shot from *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), this close-up on the character's tear-filled eyes conveys a sense of immediacy and authenticity. Together with the shaky, hand-held camera that mirrors how the characters are stumbling around in the dark and the flickering lights that cast deep shadows into unknown spaces, the use of the close-ups contributes to our fear. The audience becomes uncomfortable and uneasy, we know we can never be safe.

Genre: Soap Operas

The melodramatic form of the soap opera also uses close-up shots, to different effect.

Soap operas and other melodramatic television programs also often use close-ups so we can easily see the expressive faces of the actors. Yet these close-up shots do not evoke fear; rather, when taken with other conventions of the genre, they serve to highlight the personal dramas and emotional narratives that are being conveyed. The excessive acting style and cues from the music situate us toward expecting that there will be a focus on family life, personal relationships, and emotional and moral conflicts. They often take place in homes and other domestic spaces, where the characters are constantly running into each other and can't escape their interconnections.

These are some of the ways that close textual analysis can help us to better understand what is being accomplished in certain genres. In Jason Mittell's chapter on Genres, he also reminds us that genres are not defined by the collection of texts they encompass, but are a much more complicated set of categories that shape audience expectations and evaluations, industrial practices, and ideologies.

Key Concepts

- Matthew Arnold and his definition of culture
- Mise-en-scene
- Analysis of:
    - Setting
    - Composition
    - Staging
    - Cinematography
    - Film stock
    - Costume
    - Makeup and hair
    - Acting style
    - Lighting
- Genres:
    - Film Noir
    - Horror
    - Soap Operas

Week 7: Formal Analysis

Introduction Video | Dr. Jonathan Gray | 1:35 mins

https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Week+7+-+Formal+Analysis/0_l4yt89za

Key Questions
• What is formal analysis?

- How can we apply formal analysis to the movie *Gravity*?
- How do structures contribute to layers of meaning?
- How can we apply formal analysis to television opening sequences?

Formal Analysis

This lesson will continue to develop your skills for analyzing media texts by introducing the concept of formal analysis. Formal analysis sees a work of art as a bundle of components organized into structures, and tries to understand how these components work together to impact the audience. We have already started to identify some formal elements such as mise-en-scene and all of the different components that are placed within the frame.

But formal analysis also includes other aspects that we can analyze in order to consider how a work is constructed to produce effects on us. These include:

- Mise-en-scene
- Structure of the text
- Materials and techniques of the medium
- The producers and their interventions into the text

We will be applying formal analysis to *Gravity*, so you should have screened this film before completing the rest of the lesson. This was a popular science fiction film from 2013 that won Academy awards for directing, cinematography, visual effects, editing, score, sound editing, and sound mixing. Its unique form and setting are now part of a larger set of films within its genre that take place in space and use similar formal elements (such as *Interstellar* and *The Martian*), which is why it can be helpful to try to understand it more deeply.

Camera Shots, Angles and Movements

One of the ways that we can improve our ability to analyze what is happening in a media text is through is to develop our vocabulary for describing how an image is shot. In this short video, you will be introduced to a number of different names for camera shots, angles, and movements, as well as what feelings and meanings those choices might convey to a viewer.

Here is a partial list of some of the most important terms that were mentioned in this video. You may want to use them to describe the use of the camera when you analyze media texts:

- Close-Up, Extreme Close-Up
- Long Shot, Extreme Long Shot
- Medium Shot
- POV Shot
- Low Angle
- High Angle
- Top Angle
- Dutch Angle
- Over the Shoulder
- Pan and Tilt
- Tracking Shot
- Zoom
- Single Take

Gravity – Formal Analysis | Dr. Maria Belodubrovskaya | 9:11 mins.

https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Gravity+-+Formal+Analysis/0_omd2f8ok

In the reading from Bordwell and Thompson, they help us to think about the choices that filmmakers make with regard to form. They emphasize that form and content work alongside one another in order to produce meaning for the viewer, setting up expectations through delivery of certain patterns. These are the key questions that we can ask in order to consider these choices:

- For any element in the film, what are its functions in the overall form? How is it motivated?

- Are elements or patterns repeated throughout the film? If so, how and at what points? Are motifs and parallelisms asking us to compare elements?

- How are elements contrasted and differentiated from one another? How are different elements opposed to one another?

- What principles of progression or development are at work through the form of the film? Does a comparison of the beginning and ending point toward the film's overall form?

Layers of Meaning

We also want to be attuned to the different levels of meaning that a text can have. While some meanings are very surface-level and obvious, we also can find ways to interpret meanings that are much deeper, or that connect to ideas beyond the film itself.

Here are some of the terms we use to describe these levels:

- **Referential**—Refers to things or places that already have significance in the real world so that the viewer can readily make sense of them.

- **Explicit**—This is the obvious "point" that the film is trying to make, the more overt, obvious levels of meaning.

- **Implicit**—But we can also dig for meanings that are not stated directly, but instead the viewer needs to work to produce an interpretation of the film's meaning. These meanings may rely upon the explicit or referential, but are more below the surface.

- **Symptomatic**—These meanings are more abstract and general, getting at the film's deeper, even involuntary meaning.

So these are the meanings where you have to peel back some of the layers, and see what's underneath.

The reading gives an example of how this works with the meanings of *Wizard of Oz,* but to practice these terms we can also use the example of *Gravity*.

Layers of Meaning: *Gravity*

- **Referential**—A woman is left stranded alone in space after her shuttle is destroyed, and she must fight to survive and journey back to Earth.
- **Explicit**—A woman must find the strength within herself to survive on her own in the isolation of space.
- **Implicit**—A mother who is broken from having lost a child and her male companion is left without purpose and spinning out of control until she can start all over on her own.
- **Symptomatic**—If we go even deeper, we might argue that the film is really about how women rely on the rationality and logic of men to solve problems, even when they actually have the strength to do so on their own.

Each of these levels is not necessarily completely separate from the other levels, as each layer of meaning builds upon and can become inextricably connected to the other meanings. But the fact that there is a clear difference between explicit meanings and implicit meanings will be important as you write your textual analysis paper, because you will be crafting your argument around an *implicit* meaning.

Formal Analysis of Television Openings

Television intros and opening sequences can be a helpful place to start thinking about formal analysis, because they are often densely packed with meaning. They usually need to do a lot of work introducing everything from characters, genre, tone, and style to prospective or new viewers, while also getting returning viewers back in the mood.

The sequence that opened the Showtime series *Dexter* offers us an example. Even if you are unfamiliar with this show, watch it and think about how it is setting up expectations through tone, visuals, sound, and music. There is no text or title cards, but hopefully through analysis of form we can still begin to decode a lot about what the show is about.

Dexter – Opening Sequence | 1:36 mins.

https://youtu.be/QhGMGjs3DSs

What did we see? First, the sequence uses a lot of extreme close-up shots, which immediately promises us greater access, or literally a closer look at this character. These close-ups include a man engaged in his morning routine as he performs simple, everyday tasks like flossing or putting on a t-shirt. But each act also resembles an act of violence—the floss, for instance, looking more like a garrote, the t-shirt like a sheet placed over a corpse. And thus this character is surrounded by violence and aggression, and these qualities are already a part of him—all we needed to do is look up close to see it.

We can also note that numerous shots point to his enthusiasm for this violence, such as the relishing of killing a mosquito and the voracious cutting of flesh in the preparation of breakfast. Images of a shaving accident remind us that drops of blood are a part of everyday routines, but also help to reveal the dual nature of the gruesome acts that we can become comfortable with. Even if the viewer is unfamiliar with the fact that this program follows a serial killer, this opening conveys a great deal about *Dexter* as show and Dexter as character: we know to expect violence from him, and to expect his enjoyment of it. We know that we're going to get uncomfortably close to him, to be spared no detail. And we know it's primarily about him, as there are no other characters depicted or hinted at.

But of course turning all these everyday things into violent acts is an act of visual play, albeit dark, and thus the show signals its often dominant mode of dark humor. The music helps here too, as it's both eerie and somewhat

whimsical. There's a carnival aspect to it that suggests Dexter is our carnival figure, vacillating between more jaunty, playful parts and more raw aggressive parts (as when the saxophone roars alongside the pushing down of his French press coffee plunger). Capping that dark humor is his final wink at the camera and the musical "ding" that accompanies it, as this is both somewhat threatening and somewhat playful.

So these are some of the ways that we can apply formal analysis to different kinds of texts besides film.

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Key Takeaways

- Formal analysis
- Camera shots, angles, and movements
- Phases of the story, film structure
- Mobile camera
- Long takes
- Point-of-view shot
- Referential meaning
- Explicit meaning
- Implicit meaning
- Symptomatic meaning

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Week 8: The Text Outside the Text

Key Questions
• How are texts in conversation with other texts? • What counts as a "text"? What is the "text outside the text"? • How do we build stories across different texts?

When we look at a movie or TV show, the reality is that we don't see it in a vacuum—swirling around in our minds are connections between this text and all the other texts we've read or seen. This of course impacts how we understand that single text.
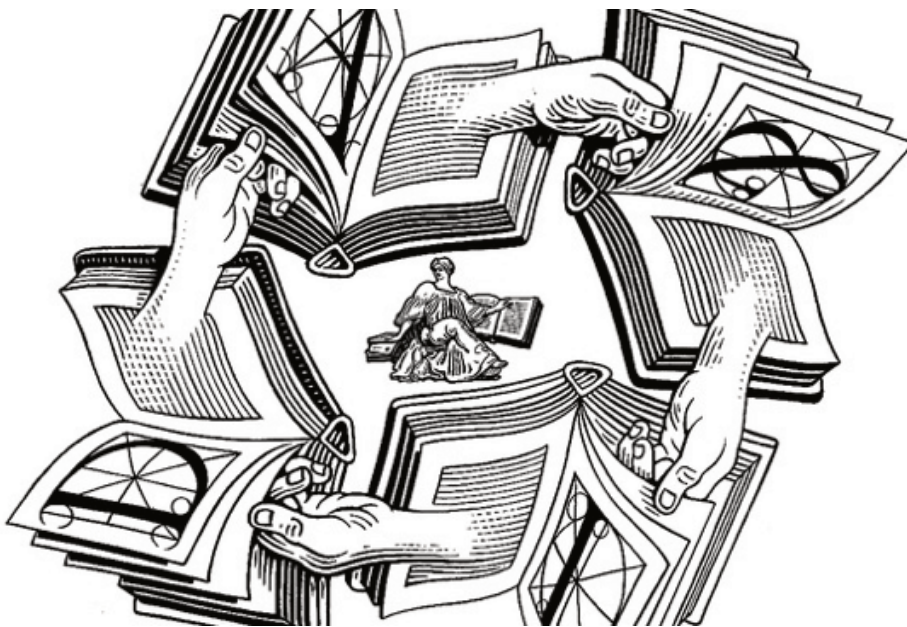
Texts are always in conversation with other texts.

Intertextuality is the idea that texts are always in conversation with other texts, or the use of recognizable textual references that allow viewers to read texts in relation to other texts. It's the idea that no text creates meaning in and of itself, but instead is always gaining meaning from other texts we have consumed. Media make sense to us because of information that comes from outside the texts, from other texts.

We can also think about intertextuality capturing the idea of

textual indebtedness. An artist is indebted to artists that have gone before and created interesting forms. When you then imitate that form, a relationship is created between your own work and the work that precedes it. For instance, as Jonathan Gray reminds us, as soon as a book starts with the phrase, "once upon a time," we know that it's signaling the world of the fairy tale. It's indebted to the form of the fairy tale in order for readers to understand that signal. But there are many different forms of intertextuality, including allusion,

Allusion

Allusions make reference to other texts directly or through implication. It's usually thought of as deliberate on the part of the writer or creator, where they are consciously evoking the idea of another text.

Community | (brief clip) | .29 seconds

The TV show *Community* often built its humor around making allusions to other media. In this clip, the whole school is at war with each other in a giant paintball competition. We can see instead of looking like an ordinary sitcom, Ken Jeong's character Senor Chang enters the room as if he is in the middle of a Hong Kong action film, complete with slow motion and musical backdrop.

Ken Jeong's character Senor Chang enters the room as if he is in the middle of a Hong Kong action film.

It can also be seen as a reference to Scarface, given how he holds the machine gun and sprays bullets across the room. The pleasure of watching these episodes is in making those connections. The references are meant to be recognized by the viewer, so the intertextuality serves as an exchange of knowledge between the producer and the consumer.

Mashups and Remixes

Mashups and remixes also make use of this kind of intertextuality, creating something totally new by stealing from other styles or creative works and throwing them into a new context. For instance, there are many remixed versions of Drake's song Hotline Bling.

Here's a clip from the original music video:

Drake | .55 seconds

https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/id/0_8ieva989?width=1298&height=802&playerId=25717641

Here are some of the remixes that people have made:

Drake Parodies (compilation) | 1:50 mins

We can think about how the meaning of the image changes based on what song he seems to be dancing to. While the original song might be striving for coolness and sexuality, the remixed versions portray the artist quite differently—as silly, juvenile, awkward, sporty, or even racialized differently as Latino.

The Text is Alive

Intertextual meaning goes in two directions – we bring understandings from media culture to our understanding of the text, but we also bring texts with us as we encounter new versions of media culture. This quote from Bakhtin can also help to explain how to conceptualize the text:

> " "There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future). Even *past* meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all) – they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue [….] Nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival." – Mikhail Bakhtin

Intertextuality reminds us that the text is always alive. It's not finished when we stop reading it, because it then becomes part of your memories. Even future re-viewing of the same text will be read differently because you've already seen it. Any text can be made new upon re-viewing it due to intertextuality.

Paratexts

Another way that we make meaning from texts is through paratexts, or the variety of materials that surround a single text. Para- as a prefix means "beside, or adjacent to" so paratexts exist outside the text but are right next to it. They are these additional textual elements that also help us to frame a text and shape its interpretation.

The paratext for a book includes its jacket and all of the info contained on it.

In its most basic form, we can think about the paratexts for a book. This includes the cover of the book and all of the info that is given there – its font and graphic design, the description of its contents, recommendations from other authors, publishing information. We learn all sorts of things about the author from their picture—their gender, their race, their appearance. These all shape our understanding of the actual text. Then there are things outside the physical object that serve as paratext—interviews with the author, reviews, public responses, ads for the book. Paratexts tell us what to expect, and set us up to understand the text in a certain way.

Paratexts for media can include videogames, websites, fan vids, spoilers, fan fiction and film, spinoffs, novelizations, sequels and prequels, posters, podcasts, board games, ad campaigns, fan videos, and more.

Trailers as Paratext

Trailers promote ticket sales while also shaping your understanding of what the film means.

Trailers are obviously an important form of paratext. They primarily play a promotional role, trying to draw you into seeing the film. But they're also framing your understanding of the film. You learn something about the characters and whether or not you can identify with them, you learn what genre the film will be and what you can expect according to that genre, you learn what kind of world a film is set in. It's rare that we have an experience of seeing a movie without knowing a single thing about it. Usually the decision to watch something comes with some previous knowledge, and that knowledge comes from paratext.

Then when you actually see a film, you already have a history of expectations built from seeing that trailer. Maybe you'll be disappointed because the trailer made it seem like the film was headed in a different direction than it is, or maybe you had low expectations and then it surprises you by being good. Paratexts can be contradictory or frame your viewing in a way that isn't helpful, but it nevertheless impacts your viewing of the text.

Hype

Hype is advertising that goes above and beyond an accepted norm, establishing presence that is brief and unsustainable. It promotes and publicizes an idea intensively, and is often accomplished through synergy. We already learned about synergy in regard to vertical integration, but here we can think about synergy creating hype as well as meaning.

As we learned with our discussion of media as a commercial product, hype is certainly created with the goal of financial profit. But that doesn't make it meaningless or illegitimate; when hype is a kind of promotion that also creates meaning. Let's look at an example.

Paratextual Hype for Blair Witch Project

The Blair Witch Project was a horror movie from 1999 that was made for only $35,000, but ended up being wildly popular and making millions of dollars. Part of its story of success was its use of paratext to shape meaning.

The Blair Witch Project used real-looking flyers to make it seem like it was true.

The story was about three college filmmakers who go into the woods to investigate this myth witch and end up missing, and this movie is a collection of their found footage. But if we look at how the film was promoted and hyped, we can see a deliberate attempt to make it seem like a real documentary about a case of missing persons. They spread posters describing the missing students, and their website gave what seemed like real evidence from the police and interviews with the families. As a result, many filmgoers went to the movie thinking it was real, which was of course much scarier than your average horror movie.

We can see how paratext played an important role in how people responded to the movie, what their experience of watching the movie was like, what they thought it was fundamentally about. This is a fairly extreme example where people were maybe tricked into believing a lie, but it's a good reminder of the power of paratext and what narrative possibilities it can open up.

Transmedia Storytelling

Another form of paratextual meaning can be seen in transmedia storytelling. This is a strategy where media creators tell a story through systematically dispersing the content across multiple delivery channels. It is still one cohesive story, but that story must be pieced together across different forms of media—such as a TV show, a website, a series of animated shorts, and a comic book that each contain elements of the narrative.

Importantly, this is not the practice of telling one story in a lot of different places, like when a novel gets adapted into a movie. This is just adaptation. Transmedia storytelling is a unified and coordinated entertainment experience where each medium makes its own unique contribution to the narrative.

The Matrix

When the Wachowskis set out to make the second and third Matrix movies, they started to take advantage of transmedia storytelling. Here is a video about the making of the video game:

Enter the Matrix | 1:30 mins

https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Enter+the+Matrix/0_nr2sqs0m/75945101

We can see that to fully experience the world of the Matrix, there are many different media you would need to consume—the movies, the video game, comic books, web sites. We can see how each element doesn't tell the

exact same story. They make their own unique contributions to a single unfolding narrative. As they say, the video game is seen as a "third movie" with its own narrative, not just a lunchbox promoting the movie.

So we can see that transmedia storytelling allows creators to extend narratives, offer backstory, map the world to give richer depth, or offer additional character perspectives. This can be exciting and enticing for audiences who are hungry for additional detail and enjoy the process of consuming different media. It can also draw in new audiences who might be more comfortable with one medium over another. But it can also backfire at times, causing audience members to feel like they are always missing something or have to do too much work to keep up.

Transmedia stories are most successful when they're connected to a complex fictional world that has a lot of interesting characters to explore. If we look at the kinds of stories that often attract deep fandoms, they often have these expansive worlds where you can dig deeply into a lot of different aspects of the story. Things like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Harry Potter, Star Wars*. These worlds are complicated and richly developed, so it becomes possible to flesh out aspects of their world across different media platforms.

The possibilities for transmedia storytelling are obviously opened up because of media consolidation, where media companies are horizontally integrated and can spread their franchises across all sorts of different media platforms. But transmedia storytelling and convergence culture are also deeply connected to consumer practices and the ways that viewers interact with media.

Conclusion

In our examination of textual meanings and interpretations, we now can see that it's important to expand our idea of what a text is to include some of the text outside the text. We've thought about how texts are always referencing other texts in order to create meaning, how paratexts impact our understanding of a text and how it will be received by audiences, and how narratives can move from one medium to another. Together we can question what it is that we are studying and consider that our idea of the text can never remain stable, it's always being impacted by other texts and by the audiences who do things with texts.

Key Concepts
• Intertexts • Allusion • Parody • Paratexts • Hype • Trailers • Convergence • Transmedia storytelling

Week 9: Representation and Stereotypes

(Go to the Online Lessons Home page to access a PDF version.)

Introduction Video | Dr. Lori Lopez | 1:06 mins

https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Week+9+-+Representation+and+Stereotypes/0_3g6xzz2a

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Key Questions
• Consider the way that groups of people are represented in the media and what it means

- Learn how stereotypes work
- Explore the way that images of minorities evolve
- Understand the cycle of oppression

What is Representation?

Mimesis – images imitate or mimic real life

One way of understanding representation is through **mimesis**, or the idea that **images mimic or imitate real life** — such as when an artist tries to represent an object when they paint it. Another way of understanding representation is the idea that **one thing stands in for a lot of things**, such as when our representative government works by having one person represent an entire district or state full of people.

The House of Representatives – one person represents a district or state

This can then be connected to media representations as well — media images represent people, events, situations, and other real things by standing in for them. We believe that media representations have a connection to real life. Today we want to think about the consequences of this kind of representation.

In particular, we want to consider the consequence of **representing difference**. This can include categories such as gender, sexuality, race, nationality, socioeconomic class, or others. When certain differences come to be represented the same pattern over and over again, there are social consequences that we will learn to recognize.

What are Stereotypes?

In some ways, stereotypes are simply a natural psychological impulse to categorize the world into recognizable groups. We all subconsciously create and rely upon stereotypes. But we also want to pay attention to the way that these categorizations and generalizations made about groups of people are unevenly applied and can lead to social inequalities.

First, consider these common stereotypes:

- Women are better at cooking and nurturing children than men
- Asians are good at math
- Gay men are effeminate
- Latinos in the U.S. work in service jobs

Attributes of Stereotypes

Some attributes of stereotypes described here will help us to better understand their effects:

Stereotypes contribute to **essentialism**, or the idea that there exists an innate essence or quality of a person that makes them who they are. Essentialism operates on an all-or-nothing logic, where you think that you know something about somebody because of only one attribute (race, gender, nationality, etc.). Some aspects of essentialism are even tied to biology, such as the belief that a woman's hormones lead her to be more nurturing. But this way of thinking is problematic because it leads to gross generalizations that disregard how all social groups are complex, multifaceted, and impossible to reduce to one common characteristic or inherent quality. It flattens difference and denies the reality that every identity category is comprised of a diverse group of individuals.

Stereotypes rely on essentialism, which is premised on all-or-nothing logic connecting an inherent quality to a larger characterization of a person.

Stereotypes are **repeated over and over,** which contributes to normalization. When we see the same ideas

COMM ARTS 250 • 94

repeated so often, we often stop questioning if they are true. Sometimes stereotypes are even based on true evidence, and you may have encountered many individuals who see to align perfectly with the way that you stereotyped them.

Why Do You Think Stereotypes Are True? | Franchesca Ramsey | 6:23 mins

For more discussion of how stereotypes are connected to reality, check out this video. It explains the different ways that media contribute to people starting to people starting to believe stereotypes, wrongly assuming that there are no exceptions when our world is filled with exceptions.

Stereotypes are **believed.** No matter how much you may tell yourself that you are immune to the power of stereotypes, the reality is that we all start to unconsciously believe stereotypes because we see them so often. Studies have shown that we implicitly trust white people over black people, straight people over gay people, etc. (Don't believe it? Take a quiz! – *provided by Project Implicit*) Resisting stereotypes takes much more effort than passively accepting them — but it can be done.

Stereotypes are **made by in-groups about out-groups**. You don't create stereotypes about yourself and people like you; stereotypes help you understand people who are different from you.

Stereotypes exist for every member of society, from the most powerful to the most marginalized and disenfranchised. But **their impact is unequal** –they harm less powerful groups more. If you belong to a privileged or dominant group, the stereotype does not hurt you as much.

> " "While all negative stereotypes are hurtful, they do not all exercise the same power in the world [….] Stereotypes of some communities merely make them uncomfortable, but the community has the social power to com-

> bat and resist them; stereotypes of other communities participate in a continuum of prejudicial social policy and actual violence against disempowered people, placing the very body of the accused in jeopardy" (Shohat & Stam, 208)

For all of these reasons, **even "positive" stereotypes can still be harmful.** This is because of the all-or-nothing logic and lack of power, but additionally, because all stereotypes produce complicated repercussions. For instance, the stereotype that "all Black men are natural athletes" can be another way of saying that Black men are only valued for their bodies, not their minds. The stereotype that "all Asians are good at math" means that many struggling students go unnoticed or do not ask for help when they need it, which can lead to underperformance and depression. Further, it creates a rift between Asians as "the model minority" and other minorities, when the reality is that people of color actually gain more from joining together than being in competition for resources.

Evolutionary Stages of Minorities in the Media

Minorities in Media | Dr. Lori Lopez | 5:19 mins

https://https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Minorities-in-Media_HD-720p.mp4/1_kizj1hp6/75945101
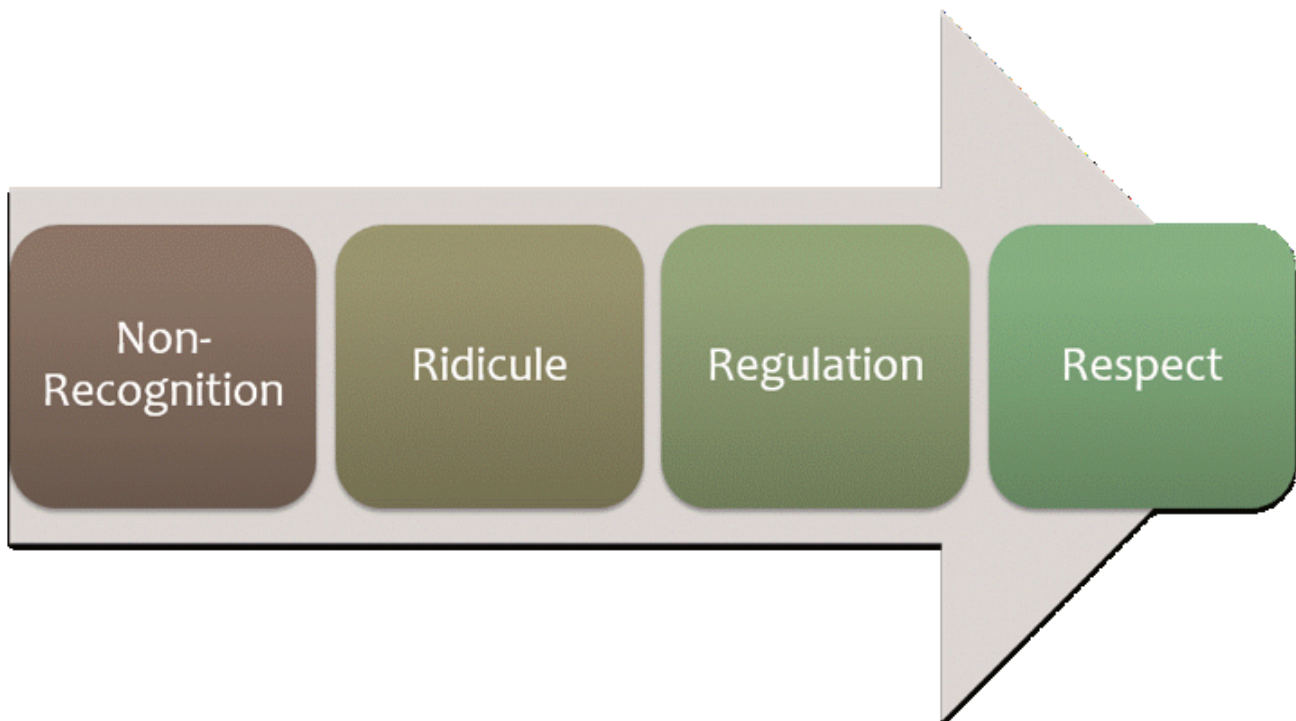
Model of evolution

One of the ways that we can think about how different groups have become visible through the media is through this model of evolution, that moves from non-recognition to ridicule to regulation to respect.

Non-recognition

A given minority group is not acknowledged by the dominant media to even exist. Also known as symbolic annihilation, when a group's entire social existence is eradicated through invisibility.

Ridicule

Minority characters are portrayed as stupid, silly, lazy, irrational, or simply laughable. This is the stage when we see negative stereotypes.

Regulation

Minority characters are presented as enforcers or administrators of the dominant group's norms. We often see this when people of color are represented in roles such as police officers, FBI agents, deputy sheriffs, police dispatchers, and other roles where they are devoted to helping "keep the peace," often by proving their loyalty to the white characters by regulating or policing their own people.

Respect

The minority group in question is portrayed no differently than any other group. Interracial relationships would also not appear extraordinary.

Note that although these four stages are portrayed in a linear evolution, the reality is that minority groups can slip backward at any point and there is a lot of fluidity and flexibility between these categories. This chart simply helps us to recognize the common patterns that representations of minorities characters have historically followed.

Burden of Representation

Another important concept for understanding minority imagery is the "Burden of Representation." This is the idea that it matters more how minority groups are represented because of these histories of underrepresentation. Minority groups are the ones in danger of suffering from stereotypes, not the dominant groups. Stereotypes of majority groups don't matter as much because they don't stand in for the whole. For instance, think about these representations of fictional men in contemporary television — if Walter White is a drug dealer, and Tony Soprano is a murderer, and Don Draper is a womanizer, there is little fear that the lives of white men all over the U.S. will be negatively impacted by these representations.

Fictional men in contemporary television – Walter White (Breaking Bad); Don Draper (Mad Men); Tony Soprano (The Sopranos)

This explains the sensitivity around stereotypes — they bear the burden of representation, which makes us worry about how minority groups are represented. The chart below gives us some clear evidence of the way that racial and ethnic minorities compare to representations of white people.

Racial and Ethnic Representation in 2014 Films

73.1% White
4.9% Black
12.5% Hispanic
5.3% Asian
4.2% Other

Source: Inequality in 700 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race and LGBT Status from 2007 to 2014

.Mic
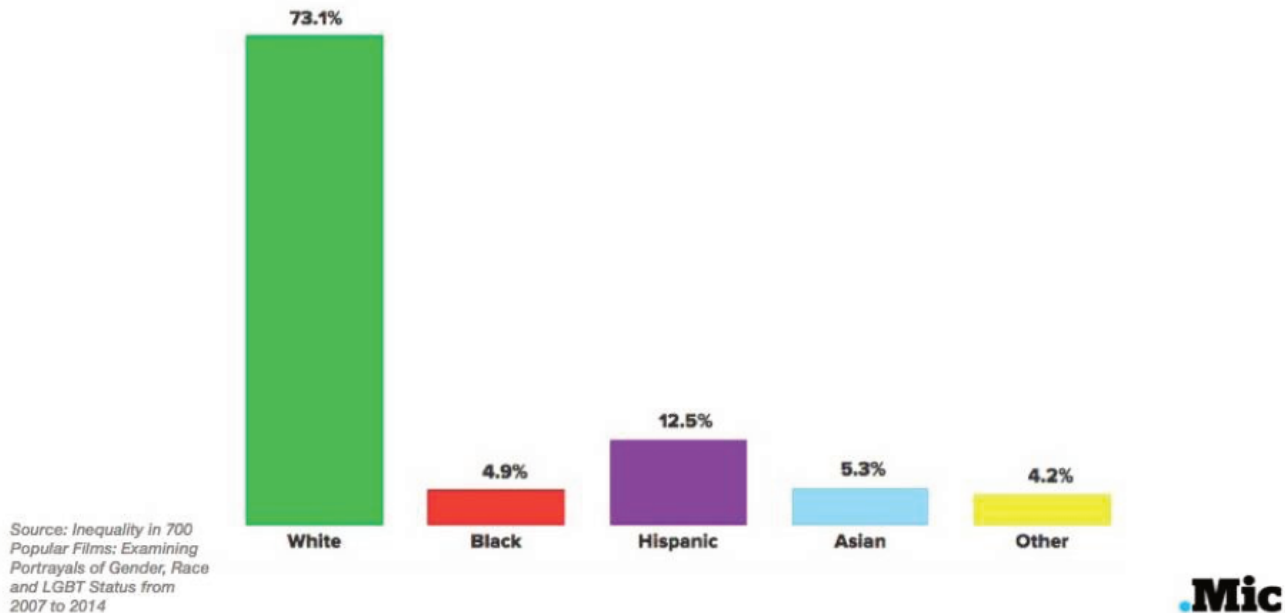
One of the factors that leads to underrepresentation is inequity in casting

Casting Issues

One of the factors that leads to underrepresentation is inequity in casting. If we look at who has been chosen to play certain roles, we can unearth a long history of people with majority identities being cast to play minority characters. This practice began as blackface, with white actors wearing black makeup to play caricatures of African Americans since the 19th century. In the 1820s, theater performers would cover their faces with blackened burnt cork and bright red lipstick, and then take on exaggerated performance styles for comedic effect. White audiences loved these raucous performances, but of course they shored up the idea that actual African Americans didn't belong on stage and that their lives existed only to be mocked and denigrated. The practice of "blacking up" then extended into filmmaking, where white actors could simply paint their skin darker in order to play Black roles.

The same practice has also applied to Asians (yellowface), Native Americans (redface), and other people of color such as Middle Easterners and Indians (brownface).

How is This Still a Thing? | John Oliver | 4:36 mins

John Oliver tackled this in a recent episode, watch the video (below) to learn more. As you watch the video, consider these questions:

- *What are some of the reasons filmmakers use to justify the use of white actors for characters of color?*

- *What might be wrong with their reasoning?*

- *What kinds of backlash do actors of color face?*

Outside of race, there are many different minority identities that are often played by people who do not really embody those identities — including gay characters played by straight actors, and peoople with disabilities played by able-bodied actors.

These casting decisions can be harmful for many reasons. They take away roles from minority actors, and imply (if not directly state) that minorities are not talented enough to play themselves. Together, this practice maintains a small stable of actors rather than diversifying the opportunities available. Racial minorities are often discouraged from becoming actors because there are so few parts available for them, and the ones that do exist are often terribly stereotypical and offensive.

Cycle of Oppression
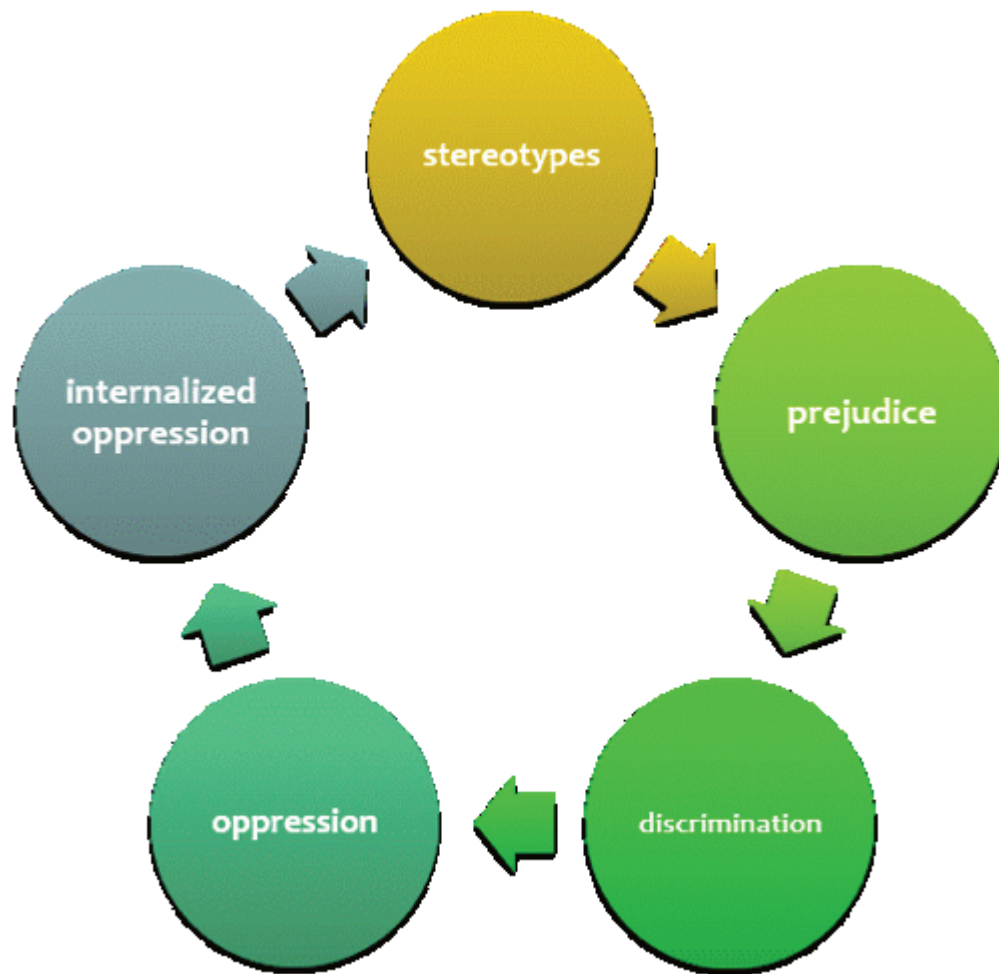
Cycle of Oppression

These problems in representations are connected to larger problems in society more broadly. This is called the Cycle of Oppression, where each problem contributes to the next in a never-ending cycle:

Stereotypes

We now know what stereotypes are — the generalizations that are made about a group of people that can serve to limit them.

Prejudice

Prejudice is when you meet someone and make a judgment before you really know them. You simply create a judgment about them (usually negative) based on how they look, or what single attributes you can easily identify about them.

Discrimination

Discrimination is when you act on your prejudice, taking a harmful action toward a member of a group because of your prejudice.

Oppression

Oppression is the systematic subjugation of a group of people. All the "isms" are forms of oppression — racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, colorism, sizeism, ageism, colonialism, etc.

Internalized Oppression

Internalized Oppression is when minorities "buy into" the system of oppression by starting to believe that the stereotypes are true.

Let's see how this cycle works in a story:

There is a **stereotype** that men are better leaders than women. A talented woman applies for a job as a manager, and before knowing anything about her, the person who interviews her is **prejudiced** and assumes she probably doesn't have leadership capabilities. That person then **discriminates** against her by deciding to hire a man instead of her. Besides, she might cost the company a lot of money if she decides to have a baby.

When this happens over and over and women are systematically subjugated by these routine forms of discrimination, it feeds into the larger problem of patriarchy, which is a form of **oppression** against women. The woman, having been denied a job, decides that maybe she is better off just staying home to take care of her children and gives up on applying to other managerial positions.

She has **internalized the oppression** by believing that she is not suitable for a leadership position. Other people meet her, and when she tells them she is happier staying home with her children than working as a manager, it feeds into the **stereotype** that men are better leaders than women.

Key Takeaways

- Representation
- Evolutionary Stages of Minorities in the Media

  - Non-recognition
  - Ridicule
  - Regulation
  - Respect

- Stereotypes
- Burden of representation
- Inequality in casting
- Blackface/yellowface/redface/brownface
- Cycle of Oppression

  - Stereotypes
  - Prejudice

- Discrimination
- Oppression
- Internalization

Week 10: The Gaze and Othering

(Go to the Online Lessons Home page to access a PDF version.)

Introduction Video | Dr. Jonathan Gray | 2:10 mins

Key Questions
• What do we know about practices of looking, or spectatorship?

- How does "the gaze" work?
- What is othering?
- How does Orientalism connect to practices of othering?

Spectatorship is the practice of looking

Theorizing Spectatorship

Spectatorship is the practice of looking, or thinking about the ways that we all participate in becoming spectators. In this lesson we will be asking about the key features of the way that we look, as well as why it is important to think about looking.

One of the central concepts connected to the practice of looking is The Panopticon. This is a concept created by Jeremy Bentham that refers to a plan for a prison tower. It is designed so that the prisoners are stacked one on top of each other all on a wall, and there is a watchtower in the middle so the guards can see every prisoner at any time. But the important thing is that the prisoners can't see into the watchtower, which is shielded by dark glass. As a result, they feel like they are being watched all the time, and they modify their behavior as a result.

Jeremy Bentham's prison design was meant to make prisoners feel watched at all times.

The Panopticon has become a metaphor for the relentless gaze, where we assume an imagined spectator at all times. It's about how we modify behavior due to the perceived threat of surveillance. Today we often talk about the concept of a "surveillance society," where we have so many ways of being surveilled, whether it's through security cameras and traffic cameras, or our phones, fitbits, and other digital devices. As a result, we may not literally be in the position of being actively surveilled at all moments, but it nonetheless impacts us to know that we could be.

The way that we look at one another is important to consider because there are systems of power that are activated when we can see and be seen. In general, the person doing the looking has power, as is certainly the case with The Panopticon, where looking is about policing. But looking can also be a more interactive process where the power dynamics are not unidirectional. Sometimes pleasure is involved in both looking and being looked at. The concept of scopophilia can help us to understand some of the nuances of looking.

Scopophilia

One aspect of scopophilia is the idea that it's pleasurable to look at things. Think of all of the pleasurable activities in which we partake simply by looking—going to the zoo, people-watching on busy streets, old-fashioned freak shows, art museums. Another side of scopophilia is the reverse, or the pleasure of being looked at. This is when we take pleasure from presenting ourselves to be the object of looking, whether it's through self-presentation via

social media, or taking a selfie, or maybe even the way that some people plan their weddings so carefully because they're preparing to have everyone look at them.

We can connect this to media through that idea that cinema is often theorized as being centered on the pleasure of looking. In the darkened theater, we enjoy the feeling of looking in on a private world. But there are many other ways that the pleasures of looking are invoked through media images and discourses.

This HP advertisement for a camera is all about looking—the man and his camera see eye to eye, and then the camera and the man both look at the woman.

In this fashion editorial, this woman is casually walking down the street but we can see her amidst everyone. She doesn't even seem to know it, but she stands out. She catches our eye, everyone else is blurry.

These ads focus specifically on looking and the pleasure of looking, but they also start to reveal a common patter in terms of gender—it's often men who are doing the looking, and women who are being looked at.

Visual Power Dynamics

When we consider the way that gender intersects with the power dynamics of looking, we can start to see that men and women are positioned differently in relation to practices of looking.

> ❝ "Men act, women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at." – John Berger

In our traditional visual culture, men are the lookers, and women are the ones who we look at.
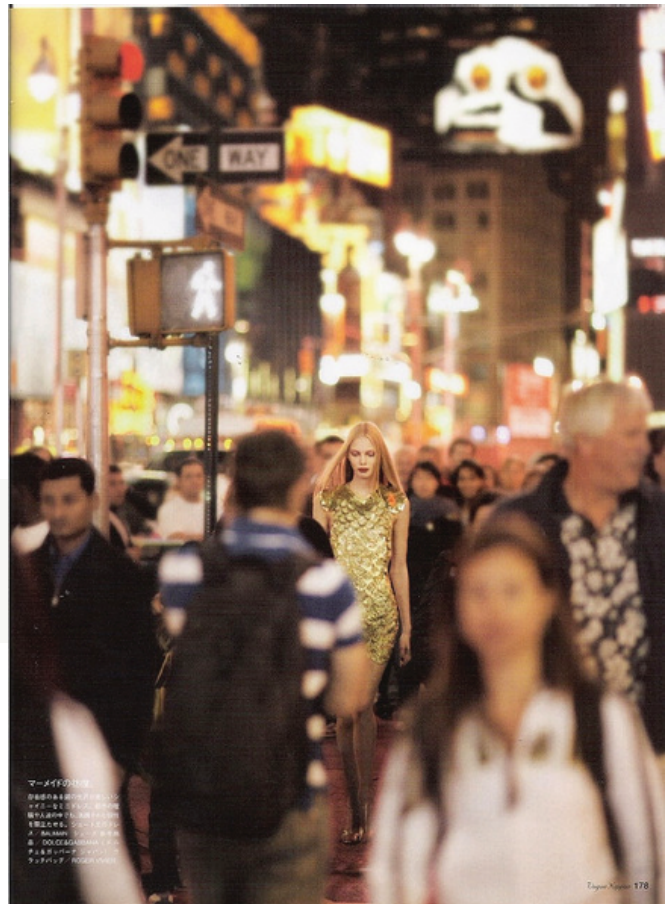
She catches our eye, everyone else is blurry.

A traditional girl's room from a furniture catalogue.

If we look at these advertisements for children's furniture, we can clearly see this dynamic in how we decorate bedrooms for boys and girls. In girl's bedrooms we see pretty objects—flowers, dolls, books, pink decorations.

An array of traditional boy's rooms from a furniture catalogue.

But in boy's bedrooms we see a focus on being active and exploring the world around them—an airplane, a ball, binoculars, a treehouse, skates, wild animals, a surfboard. Boys take flight and go on field trips, while girls just stay indoors and look pretty. This mirrors the idea that men are active and women are passive.

Beyond gender differences, these discourses also shape notions of sexuality. Women are consistently reduced to be an object of desire for men, who are presumed to be heterosexual. We can see this in the art world very clearly, where painters and other artists have traditionally explored the female nude form. We can see from the way she positions her body that she is available to both the person who is painting her, and to the people who are viewing the painting.

Venus of Urbino by Titian, dated to 1538.

> 66 "Her body is arranged in the way it is, to display it to the man looking at the picture. This picture is made to appeal to *his* sexuality. It has nothing to do with her sexuality [….] Women are there to feed an appetite, not to have any of their own" – John Berger, p. 200

An ad for Dolce & Gabbana clothing reveals a gendered power dynamic.

In contemporary advertising, this power dynamic can become even more explicit and frightening with the implication that this woman lies lifeless on the ground, while clothed men stand authoritatively over her.

An ad for Givenchy clothing reveals a gendered and sexualized power dynamic.

If women do act, it's for men's pleasure, for their gaze. In this image the two women are focused on one another, but the two men flanking the group of women remind us that they do so as a performance for the men who look on.

Gendering the Gaze

Throughout the history of cinema, we can see that women are the ones on display, connoting what is called "to-be-looked-at-ness." She is the one you are supposed to look at, an object we are invited to stare at. As we mentioned with scopophilia, there can be a pleasure that comes from being looked at.

An ad for Gucci perfume displays "to-be-looked-at-ness," where we are supposed to look at her.

Women are often captured in images like this, where they clearly know that they are being watched and the idea is that they are performing for the viewer, inviting us to look at her. She encourages it.

Women's Entrances | 2:11 mins

https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Womens+Entrances/1_excyxmuv

We can notice that time actually freezes so we can take time to look at the woman. The woman is incredibly eroticized. Even in movies that centrally focus around men, women will appear as eye candy, sometimes literally just serving to be looked at, and the way that it is shot reminds us of her role.

We can also look at some trends in movie posters that remind us how many times we have seen images that are just close-ups on body parts. Just looking through their legs. Just looking at their chest, their head and face don't matter.
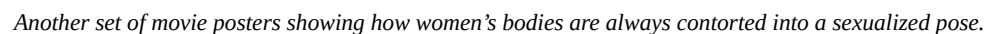
This is called dismemberment—when just one part of the body stands in for the whole body.

These serve to remind us that women aren't central characters with thoughts and feelings and actions to take. Women are just there to be looked at, even if it's just one body part that we're looking at. This is called dismem-

berment—when just one part of the body stands in for the whole body. This is obviously dehumanizing, since the woman's body becomes an object without a real person attached to it.

Another set of movie posters showing how women's bodies are always contorted into a sexualized pose.

Here's another pose that women's bodies are always contorted into—the pose that somehow manages to show the curve of the breasts AND the butt. We know that this is a pose only women are expected to take on, because when we see men do it, it looks ridiculous and nonsensical.

Here's how men usually look in the Avengers.

Here is a version where the men's bodies are positioned in a way that we never see.

Once again we're reminded that the way women are portrayed is always with men's desires in mind, and men are never subject to the same visual demands. There's an inequality there.

Voyeurism

Another term that can help us understand this position is Voyeurism, or taking pleasure from secretly looking, not being seen looking. Voyeurism is when the person who's being looked at has not given permission to the looker.

Voyeurism is the pleasure that comes from secretly looking.

Think about what it feels like to have someone voyeuristically look at you—it feels creepy and uncomfortable, because the hidden person has all the power. The voyeur controls what they look at and gets to look freely, while the person who is being watched has no clue what is going on.

Laura Mulvey is an important theorist who also thought about visual pleasure and the way that gender plays a role in visual pleasure. Like Berger, she thinks that the pleasure we get from film has to do with "the unconscious of patriarchal society," so that films subconsciously uphold patriarchy.

But there is something else that Mulvey believes happens when we watch movies—as we watch what is happening, we take on position of the characters and the film as well as the film's overall ideology. So we are getting pleasure from looking and we are taking on of the filmic identity. Together, she theorizes that there are really three different kinds of looking that are going on at the same time.

Three looks:
1. Camera records the event

2. The audience watches the movie

3. The characters look at each other within the world of the movie

So we in the audience are getting pleasure from looking and the men in the film are getting pleasure from looking. Together, these constitute what she calls the male gaze, where all of these kinds of looking are gendered and sexualized, as we have seen demonstrated throughout this lesson.

The Male Gaze

Within the context of patriarchy, films use the male gaze to maintain men's power over women. Let's look at how this works, using Mulvey's arguments:

- Men control the direction of the film because they are the active ones. They are the leaders, the doers,

and the protagonists who forward the story and make things happen.

- Audiences identify with the man, becoming omnipotent with him. The camera is male and the audience is male, so everything is seen through the male perspective.

- Women are the object of the gaze, the ones who are looked at. Women also often serve as the obstacles, where they are the love interest who slows down narrative. But this still makes them the passive one that things happen to.

- Together, this is how men control women through the male gaze.

Othering

Othering | Dr. Jonathan Gray | 9:17 mins

https://mediaspace.wisc.edu/media/Othering/1_uf1t1wul

As this video shows, there are other ways that the gaze is used to communicate power differences beyond just gender, such as "othering." At a very basic level, othering is about the idea of Us versus Them. You put you and your culture at the center of your framework, and see other societies and groups as different. Of course this isn't a neutral categorization—as we talked about with stereotyping, this distinction between self and other is about translating difference into inferiority. There might not even be significant cultural differences between the two communities; othering is about constructing an imaginary referent that helps you to define who you are by what you are not. It helps you define yourself through a relationship with the other.

Orientalism

Orientalism is another specific kind of othering that is based on the distinction between "The East" and "The West." When we use those words, they are not just neutral descriptors; we are referring to a very specific way of viewing the world that has a very specific history.

> " "The construction of an imaginary Orient helped to give unity and coherence to the idea of the West. This Orient was, moreover, a mirror in which Europe (and subsequently America) could see its own supremacy reflected" – Morley and Robins

We can see from this quote that the idea of the Orient is a construction, an invention. We need to ask, does such a thing really exist? To whom? And for what reason?

> " "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences." – Edward Said

These adjectives may sound nice and lovely, but the problem is that they portray a limited perspective. Words such as "exotic" can only be deployed by an outsider who is consuming, enjoying the experience. These descriptors give little thought to those who are actually living their lives within such a culture, or the realities of their experiences. It's a tourist's perspective.

In particular, Orientalism is constructed from the position of the U.S. and Europe. The word "Orient" means East, while "Occident" means West. The term "Orient" itself is Eurocentric, particularly since we so rarely use the term "Occidental," which would be from the perspective of those in Asia and the Middle East. When Said first wrote about the Orient it described the way that Europeans viewed the Middle East and Arab peoples. More recently, for Americans we can see the same relationship between the U.S. and East Asia, places like Japan and Korea and China, in addition to the Middle East.

> " "'Our' civilisation was defined against 'their' barbarianism; 'our' beauty against 'their' bestiality. If that irrational culture had access to our rationality and science, what would be the implications for the Western sense of difference and uniqueness? If that backward culture would modernise itself where should we then find the mirror to reflect our superiority?" – Morley and Robins

We can start to see the attributes that describe the Orient here: It is exotic, strange, quaint, less modern, even barbaric. More importantly, we can see that Orientalism does not simply describe the Orient. We see that it's about having dominance and authority over the Orient. Orientalism can be understood as a discourse that produces and manage the Orient. The result is that European culture gains in strength by setting itself off against the Orient.

Key Concepts

- Spectatorship
- Panopticon
- Surveillance society
- Power and looking
- Scopophilia
- Binary power dynamics
- The male gaze
- To-be-looked-at-ness
- Dismemberment
- Voyeurism
- Laura Mulvey
- Three looks
- Othering
- Orientalism
- Exotification
- The Orient
- The Occident

This is where you can add appendices or other back matter.